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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
THE WOMEN IN FOREVER YOURS,
MARIE-LOU

by

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT DRAMA

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have
read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate
Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis
entitled The Women in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou
.....

.....
submitted by..... Judith D. Rudakoff
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of..... Arts.
.....

Drama's Vitallest Expression is the Common Day

That arise and set about Us--

Other Tragedy

Perish in the Recitation--

This--the best enact

When the Audience is scattered

And the Boxes shut--

Emily Dickinson

ABSTRACT

This thesis, entitled The Women in "Forever Yours, Marie-Lou", deals with the development of the women in Michel Tremblay's play of the same name. The background of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou and Tremblay's other plays, East-End Montreal, is discussed in terms of political, religious, social and economic circumstances. Tremblay's own roots in East-End Montreal are also mentioned in order to explain his ties to this area as a setting for his plays.

The three major types of women that Tremblay draws upon in his plays are discussed with references to characters in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou and other pertinent plays. The three major designations are the Martyr, exemplified best by Marie-Louise in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou; the Near-Rebel, such as Linda Lauzon in Les belles soeurs and the Rebel, Carmen of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou and Sainte Carmen de la Main. The goals of these characters, primarily love and acceptance as individuals, are studied along with their methods of escape from the forces holding them back from achieving these desires. The influence of such forces as tradition, the Church and family pressures are discussed.

The structure of the traditional Québécois family of pre-industrial Québec is used to place the women in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou into an historical perspective. The three women are discussed in terms of how they relate to the society around them in the light of their background and heritage as well as their present economic and social status.

The escape routes of the women are examined: Marie-Louise's religious fervour, Manon's choice to avoid reality through a life of pious seclusion and Carmen's initial evasion of reality through joining the musical world of illusion and theatricality. The lives of Carmen and Manon after the death of their parents are explored, showing their reactions to their new lives and the choices they make regarding the directions that these lives will take. The technique of echoing phrases and themes is brought up in relation to the comparison between Manon and her mother versus Carmen and her father. The analogy of a musical score is used to further elaborate upon his theory. The concept of "inner cores" is explained as a combination of conscious and subconscious urgings that combine with environment to dictate a character's choices as to which course of action he or she will follow.

As a postscript, the current situation in Québec is discussed in relation to the way it affects Tremblay and his writing. The political changes of the last year are noted as significant in that they have brought the

separatist Parti Québécois to power, allowing for a relaxation of Tremblay's bans on such things as English language productions of his plays within Québec.

Finally, the universality of Tremblay's plays is pointed out as stemming from his ability to pinpoint problems experienced by people all over the world and characterize them as readily identifiable types, common to countries wherever social turmoil has occurred.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	TREMBLAY'S QUEBEC-----	1
	Introduction-----	1
	Political Climate-----	3
	Religious Conditioning-----	8
	Social Structure-----	11
	Economic Influences-----	13
	Conclusion-----	14
II	THE WOMEN OF TREMBLAY'S PLAYS-----	16
	The Martyr-----	16
	The Near-Rebel-----	18
	The Rebel-----	20
	Goals of Love, Acceptance, Individuality-----	21
	The Challenge of New Goals-----	25
	Escape-----	26
	Women as Mouthpieces-----	35
III	QUEBEC'S HERITAGE AND THE WOMEN IN <u>FOREVER YOURS, MARIE-LOU</u> -----	36
	Structure of Traditional Quebec Family----	36
	Marie-Louise-----	42
	Carmen-----	55
	Manon-----	67

CHAPTER	PAGE
IV THE "INNER CORES" OF CARMEN AND MANON-----	75
The Aftermath of Change-----	75
"Echoing" and the Use of Musical Form-----	85
The "Inner Cores"-----	88
V POSTSCRIPT -----	110
FOOTNOTES-----	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY-----	123
APPENDIX-----	130

PREFACE

The primary purpose of this study is to trace the development of the women in Michel Tremblay's play Forever Yours, Marie-Lou. Women from Tremblay's other plays will be included in so far as they will help to isolate and understand them. Tremblay's political leanings and his use of Québec's history and cultural heritage will be used as a background to this analysis. Thus both the traditional Québec woman of the past and the modern Québec woman of the present, as portrayed by Tremblay, will be shown, with the problems which these types share and the different ways in which they choose to solve them.

Tremblay's own views and opinions will be used extensively to support my ideas, as will pertinent excerpts from the plays being discussed. All French quotations have been translated by myself in the corresponding footnotes. Any background facts needing clarification are also included in the appropriate footnotes.

I would like to acknowledge the help and encouragement given to me by my advisor, Professor James DeFelice, whose support and advice during the initial stages of the writing of this thesis were invaluable. My thanks also go to Professor Frank Bueckert, who undertook the mammoth task

of helping to create the finished project in the absence of Professor Defelice, and to committee members Professor Gordon Peacock and Professor Marcel Duciaume whose comments were both helpful and insightful. My appreciation must also be expressed to those friends and relatives who took the time to send me articles, reviews, and reports on Michel Tremblay from all across Canada, and to those people in Edmonton who did their utmost to make this project successful, particularly Alan Filewod, Myles Warren and Allison Reeves.

CHAPTER I

TREMBLAY'S QUEBEC

The plays of Michel Tremblay are centered around the lives and problems of women from the province of Québec. Men are represented in the roles of transvestites, homosexuals, madmen, and mentally, if not physically, impotent dependents or disruptive influences on these women. Of his penchant for writing primarily about women, Tremblay has stated:

I have instant empathy with women. My father was a pressman at La Patrie¹ and worked nights all the time. He was deaf. I was raised by my mother and grandmother, two aunts and a cousin. The house was full of women.²

This situation was more than just a fleeting influence on the prolific pen of Michel Tremblay, for both the home in which he lived and the type of lifestyle in his neighbourhood were to haunt him and become the sources of his writings.

Born on the corner of Fabre and Gilford in East-End Montreal in 1942,³ Tremblay was raised in an atmosphere particular to urban Québec during the Second World War. There was a shortage of men present because of the war, and this, coupled with the extreme poverty of the area in which Tremblay lived, formed a protective, closely knit society of women. These women were loath to leave their young sons

free to run loose in the world that had taken away their men. This attitude left marks on many of the youngsters growing up in this era, for they began to feel imprisoned in their own homes. The young daughters were watched even more closely than the young men, for honour was of prime importance, and with so few men available, it was assumed that the girls would throw their lives away on the first man to come their way. Tremblay, as well as many of the characters he created, felt the need to escape from this world of metaphorical prison cells and cramped minds lodged firmly in tradition and led by the old Roman Catholic doctrines of his ancestors. His escape was effected through writing and through leaving the conventional society to join the world of the homosexual underground in Montreal. Most of his characters are tinged with the same fervent wish to be free and to have the power to decide their own fates. Individuality is an important goal of his characters, for many are trapped within a prison where the behavior of the largest group of people dictates the action and thoughts of most others, with any deviation looked upon by them as unacceptable.

Tremblay realizes that not all of his characters can actually accomplish their goal to be free of the confining rules imposed upon them from childhood onwards, but he allows them to struggle valiantly in the hope that they may achieve some level of freedom. Many are crushed in the attempt but derive some satisfaction in knowing that they

have shown some signs of an individual personality by trying to live independently. Tremblay writes of the people around him in his childhood:

Ces personnages, je les ai dans la peau
On était trois familles dans la même maison:
treize dans sept pièces⁴

Une ou deux s'en sont sorties. Les autres sont
handicapées pour la vie, et certains hantent
aujourd'hui les prisons et les asiles.⁵

Tremblay is a playwright faced with a difficult situation. He is writing at a time when not only must his characters reflect the fragmented status of modern man, at odds with a world in which he is becoming a tool instead of a power, but also the coming apart at the seams of the city in which he lives and works. Tremblay has made the decision to write about characters in Montreal, the city he knows best, and has attempted to make his characters as specific and regional as possible. By making his characters as grounded in reality and believable as he can, Tremblay has achieved a universality admired by his contemporaries, for audiences from coast to coast as well as abroad have understood and empathized with his characters, especially his women.

Before exploring the nature of the women Tremblay has created, one must first set the scene for them. One must comprehend the structures within which they are functioning: political, religious, social, and economic. Québec is a place of labels. There is a nickname for almost every person and every place. The Québécois are a race trying to

find new names, new heroes, and new outlets for their dreams. Until approximately ten years ago, a large group of Québécois were the silent section of Québec, quietly living out their lives, resenting the English Canadian domination of what they considered to be their homeland. Recently the pride that has arisen has overwhelmed many inhabitants of Québec and has developed into a type of patriotism that is pushing the people of Québec to declare their support of a province which they hope will soon become their own country, separate from the rest of Canada. Tremblay, an avowed Separatist, has allowed his political sentiment to enter into his plays in very subtle ways, preferring allegory or symbolic references to blatant political diatribes. Although this will be discussed at a later point in the thesis in relation to Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, a brief illustration of this technique will be included here by way of explanation.

Tremblay sees his play Hosanna as having a distinct political message that is not present when the play is produced outside of Québec. Tremblay has stated:

For me, Hosanna is Québec. When Hosanna is produced outside Québec, a layer which is found in Québec is missing, it is never there. This is the political layer.⁶

The central conflict in this play, a question of identity and individuality versus the will of an entire society, is applicable to the current situation in Québec. Tremblay sees his home province as finally realizing that it is time to stop pretending that it is something else and time to

start capitalizing on its own culture and heritage. This sentiment has been transferred to the play and is explained by Tremblay in this way: "We're Québec. We're not a mixture of an English actress playing an Egyptian queen in an American movie made in Spain. We're Québec."⁷

Because of the recent Parti Québécois victory in the Québec provincial elections, the feelings of many Québécois have changed. Tremblay himself has mellowed to the extent that he no longer feels responsible for guiding the attitude of his people, leaving this duty instead to his government. As Tremblay has stated in a recent interview: "Well, I'm going to have to change the endings of my plays."⁸ He means that the view of his characters as oppressed symbols of his province, stifled and forced into submission by a governing body that allowed them no freedom of movement, is now defunct. As a result of this new attitude that Tremblay is developing, he has lifted his ban on English productions of his plays in Québec.

Though the political climate of Québec is now in the throes of rapid change, Montreal, the canvas upon which Tremblay has chosen to set his plays, remains unique in its bicultural atmosphere. There is the inevitable street brawl between English and French, the quiet withdrawal of funds from a local bank, and the movement of liquid assets out of the province across the border to Ontario for safekeeping; yet this bicultural atmosphere has not yet been corroded by the panic of many inhabitants and their distrust of the

governing bodies. Where else could one stand on the corner of Honoré de Balzac Avenue and Guelph Road, La Gauchetière Ouest and Peel Street?

Tremblay has gone a step further than many other French-Canadian or Québécois playwrights. He has written his plays in Joual, a street form of Québécois which has a particular harsh and often guttural accent and is interspersed with English words.⁹ By having his characters speak the way they actually would in reality, Tremblay is trying to exhort his audience to accept their language and their background, instead of trying to emulate another nation.

Tremblay says:

For the first time in our history, the artists of my generation talked as Quebeckers to Quebeckers--in Québécois. We made a rupture with the horror we had of ourselves as people. If it weren't for the artists of my generation, the PQ would never have got in.¹⁰

Tremblay feels that the artist in Québec should bring the Québécois people more of themselves interpreted by their art. Support is growing for Tremblay's theories of making the individual accept himself, or of embarrassing and humiliating him until he is finally spurred on to take action and initiate change. Now that the Parti Québécois, under leader René Levesque, has taken power and is the governing party of Québec, there is a chance that funds will be forthcoming and works will be commissioned to accomplish just this purpose in Québec. The Parti Québécois Cultural Affairs Minister, Louis O'Neill, has declared that

The cultural revolution is as important for the Québec nation as economic performances [It] will finally reach, we hope, in its results, the colonized and alienated spirits who cannot imagine for our people another destiny than that of dependence, passivity, and resignation.¹¹

It is this former attitude that Tremblay is struggling to erase, or at least alleviate, by writing of those people who have chosen to attempt to free themselves and to change their prescribed destiny. He writes also of the helpless ones who are afraid to disrupt an already formed life, be it enjoyable or miserable. The fear described throughout the plays of Tremblay is based upon loss; that is, the people are afraid to attempt something new, as the fear of failure and subsequent loss of what they already possess is enough to override any positive impulse.

Until the November 15th, 1976 victory of the Parti Québécois government, Tremblay, as stated before, refused to allow his plays to be performed in English translation in Québec, though he was approached many times by the leading theatres of the English professional theatre circles. The rationale behind this ruling was that if the English wanted to see his plays they would have to learn French in order to do so. He has stated:

Now that the Parti Québécois has won, it's not a useful gesture any more to reject the English of Québec. Now they know they're a minority, and they're obliged to learn French.¹²

The plays of Michel Tremblay, with their political innuendo and their jibes at the English minority, will now become available to the public in Québec in either English or

Québécois. The reaction of the already paranoid English-speaking section of the population is certain to be spectacular. Les belles sœurs, dealing with a group of women in Montreal's East-End, has been taped in English for a television special slated to be shown in September of 1977 on the English network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The Saidye Bronfman Centre Theatre has secured the rights to a Tremblay play. The language barrier has finally been broken down, and Tremblay's drama will now be accessible to even the most ardent anglophone resident of Québec. Whether or not this will hurt Tremblay's reputation remains to be seen, for the publicity regarding the openings of these plays will surely tout his Separatist leanings and his homosexual preferences. One can only hope that the populace of English Québec will live up to its reputation as an avid and appreciative theatre audience and give Québec's major playwright his due.

The religious overtones in the plays of Michel Tremblay are very much a part of the action of the drama. For two centuries the Québécois have been influenced by the Roman Catholic Church. Their marriages have been guided and their children raised according to the precepts and regulations of the Church, which allow for few deviations and few adjustments. It is only in approximately the last fifteen years, as the Québécois were beginning to formulate their theories of what life in their province should be like, that the heavy hand of the Church has finally been

pushed to the side. Women have started rebelling against such antiquated bans as those which forbid birth control, and men are revolting against such rules as those which forbid divorce. Whereas previous generations were saddled with the demands of their religion, the younger generations have begun to question, rebel, and treat the rules of the Church as outdated rituals fit only to be kept in museums along with the other anachronisms of traditional Québec society. The change from obedience to clinical observation of the rules, and the subsequent decisions to abandon them by many young Québécois, has been gradual, and in the last little while the Church has come to realize that it must also change and modernize along with the people it is guiding or lose its waning power completely. To illustrate this point, I would draw attention to the commercial movie industry in Québec, Montreal and its neighbouring vicinity in particular. In the early nineteen-sixties, there were no drive-in movie theatres in the province, as they had been banned by the Church, which felt that they contributed to the corruption of the young. Now, not only are there drive-in movie theatres but also indoor movie houses showing pornographic movies, which the government and Church quietly tolerate.

Tremblay's characters are not all religious, but all carry with them the influence of their ancestors' piety. Most have a sense of moral right or wrong to which they either adhere or choose to ignore. Tremblay's characters are, for the most part, a determined group, loyal to that in which

they believe, trying to crawl out of the gutter and carve a niche for themselves in the respectable part of Montreal society, or better their station therein. The dream of most of the characters portrayed in Tremblay's works is to be free of all of the influences of the past and to be able to make their dreams of autonomy come true. Here, too, is an allusion to the state of affairs in Québec, for it is also trying to gain credibility as an independent country and pull itself up from being the poor cousin to the rest of English Canada, by reconstructing itself into a self-made province dependent on no one and nothing for guidance.

The strict religious upbringing that many of the children in Québec used to receive, and to a lesser extent still do, was a prime factor in the necessity for homosexual men and women to hide their leanings, resulting in one of the largest underground gay communities in Canada, located primarily in Montreal. In the last five to ten years, the stigma associated with being homosexual has begun to wear down, and the gay community is beginning to surface and demand the rights given to any other minority group in Montreal and, indeed, in all of Canada. The religious and social restrictions are still present, but their influence on the actions and desires of those involved is lessening rapidly. Tremblay deals with many homosexuals in his plays, or with displaced people from the countryside who are plunged into the world of the gay community from a sheltered life in the uneventful rural parts of Québec. The religious training in

rural Québec is still very strong, and the adherents to its rules are often shocked by the cultural difference in the big cities. These ideas will be discussed further at a later point in the thesis, when dealing with specific characters and plays.

The social structure of Québec varies from the country to the city. In the country, most families are dominated by the oldest living member, more often than not the grandmother, as many of the men of the same age were killed during World Wars I and II. When many of the young members of the families make their moves to the big neon city, usually Montreal or Québec City, they are initiated into the individual way of life and often become a part of one movement or another to stave off the loneliness of solitary life, after the security of being surrounded by a large family. A big percentage of Montreal's gay community is made up of young men from the country trying to escape from the matriarchal realms of their childhood.

Tremblay uses the world of the theatre and the world of the transvestite as backgrounds to examine the problems of a social structure that provides few other ways to satisfy the ego and fool the psyche of his characters into a sense of well-being, albeit false. By using these examples, Tremblay is pointing out that the society in Québec is creating people who must dream in order to be happy, for they are so limited in their own real lives that they have no hope of ever achieving a dream that they have formulated.

Tremblay, in his plays, is attempting to set up a new type of character in Québec, who, after realizing that the Church does not rule him, and that society cannot claim him as a compulsory volunteer member in good standing without his permission, is finally able to stand on his own two wobbly feet and shout out his identity.

To many of the people born in Montreal's poorer French district, the East-End of the city, life is often no more than a process of proving one's self better than one's neighbour. There is an immense amount of pride in many members of this group, which will not allow them to forsake their place of birth, no matter how humble it is. The average poor Québécois resents his rich English counterpart, hates his meagre surroundings, yet will not admit to being the cause of his own problems. Tremblay deals extensively with this mentality that will not allow a person to admit his own shortcomings.

The social class with which Tremblay deals in his plays is the milieu in which he grew up, ashamed of his poverty and embarrassed by his surroundings. It was many years before pride of his French heritage overcame the second-class feeling instilled in him by his family.

When I was six years old, my father took me aside and said he had something very important to tell me. Something I should never forget. He said, "You have to speak English to get a job in Montreal." I didn't have the ear for for it...but I learned.¹³

This is the attitude that Tremblay is trying to destroy with

his writings: the attitude that causes the Québécois to be content with being a second-class citizen in a province where he is in the majority.

One of the larger centres of lower-income Montreal is found around the main street, St. Lawrence Boulevard, which used to be the retail centre of the city until Ste. Catherine Street and Sherbrooke Street took over the main part of the trade. "The Main" is a market-like street with hundreds of tiny stores, run-down pawn shops, delicatessens, and grocery stores carrying all sorts of food from the different countries whose immigrants now live in this area. Though the district is filled with immigrant Portuguese and Greeks, the French are still present, and the further east one travels, the more Québécois dialogue is heard. Tremblay mentions areas around this part of town, and he makes comparisons between such places as a smoked meat restaurant on Papineau Street and a fictitious nightclub called the Coconut Inn on "the Main," where Hélène of En pièces détachées has worked. There is élitism even in this poor but colourful part of the city, for to work on "the Main" carries much more "prestige" than to work on Papineau Street, a subsidiary of "the Main."

The social and economic environments of Tremblay's plays are translated into settings of a type characteristic of Montreal. The tenement blocks described in the beginning of En pièces détachées, in Les belles soeurs, and in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou are a series of two- or three-story narrow

houses joined together by a common wall, with long spiralling staircases leading up to the individual entrances of the houses. There are no indoor entrances as in apartment walk-ups. The staircase entrances are well-known for their lack of privacy in summer and their treacherous slipperiness in winter. The balconies, or landings of the stairs, are quite close to each other, making it very easy for one neighbour to innocently overhear exactly what is transpiring in another neighbour's home. Tremblay's opening for En pièces détachées vividly and accurately captures the flavour of one of these densely populated blocks of balconies. Tremblay's use of documentary realism interspersed with expressionistic techniques gives the plays a sense of urgency. This allows the real actions and settings drawn from his knowledge of Montreal to be expressed more emotionally with the aid of dream sequences, flashbacks, internal monologues, and thoughts that a character will speak. We are dealing with the outer people seen by the rest of the world and also their inner selves, hidden and often at odds with the outer façade. The main tensions in Tremblay's plays are between the person and situation that are real and visible, and the hoped for situation and personality which are hidden and emerge only in dreams. By presenting elements of both of these sides, Tremblay is guaranteeing himself a play with a dynamic climax in the ultimate clashing of these two very different forces.

Above all, the plays of Michel Tremblay deal with

the relationships between people. He explores the loneliness of living surrounded by others and the loneliness of being powerless. A study of his characters reveals more than tortured souls. It reveals the daily lives of people who do not understand love or life. They are living out an existence on this earth while wondering if the next world will perhaps hold something better in store for them. Tremblay's purpose is to jar his audience, to show them their own foibles, and to assure them that change is possible. His disgust with the ways of tradition and convention are validly defended in characters who live out their fears of stagnation and challenge their desire to change the world around them. The game may be "rigged" by the playwright, for his strong characters seem to be mighty adversaries of the forces portrayed opposing them. It is, however, his prerogative to choose the winning side, and up to his audiences to support his choice or reject it as far-fetched. Up until now, Tremblay's plays, with few exceptions,¹⁴ have been critically acclaimed and appreciated by large audiences. This study will deal primarily with one of Tremblay's most popular plays, Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, and the development of the characters created in this play. Tremblay's later plays, Sainte Carmen de la Main and Damnée Manon, sacrée Sandra, will be employed to draw my conjectures regarding these characters to their logical conclusions.

CHAPTER II

THE WOMEN OF TREMBLAY'S PLAYS

Tremblay's awareness of the stages of development of his characters and their goals becomes evident when they are studied in close detail. He purposely staggers their evolution, from women still living by the rules of tradition to women who have begun to rebel in an attempt to liberate themselves from the grasp of the past and achieve their personal desires. For the purposes of this study, the women in the plays of Michel Tremblay¹ will be divided into three major groups, each one containing the mores, habits, and rules that prevent these women from integrating into a unified, communicative force.

One group is comprised of those women who belong to the generation and mentality of "les belles-soeurs" and their leader, Mme Germaine Lauzon, in Les belles soeurs. The women falling into this category, which also includes Marie-Louise of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou and Robertine of En pièces détachées, are shaped and dominated by peer pressure and the rigid rules imposed upon them by their society and their religion. They are women who have not been allowed to develop freely as individuals, and they are suffering from a deep frustration that cannot easily be

alleviated.

It is remarkable that these women can survive in a modern world that is full of challenges to their religious beliefs and their values, which are the prime directing forces in their lives. That not only Marie-Louise and Robertine exist but also Manon, who belongs to a younger generation, is proof of the strength of the conditioning inbred in the Québécoises from the very start of their lives. The anonymity of a life of religious seclusion provides security for Manon, who wallows in the memories of her dead family, waiting for death to release her also. Tremblay's attitude towards this type of life seems to be pity tempered with disgust, for Manon is a woman who has virtually renounced her claim to a link in the chain of progress. Tremblay is a playwright who is very aware of the physical side of pleasure and finds it ridiculous for a healthy person to negate the pleasures of this earthly life for the promise of a dubious reward in an uncertain future. This type of woman takes advantage of her situation, by capitalizing on it in the presence of others and by demanding pity for the life she leads, when in truth it is a life that she herself has allowed to form. The blame is shifted to another person or force that has allegedly chosen this role for her to play in life, but there is no joy in this removal of guilt and responsibility from the shoulders of the character. The lessening of her responsibilities by blaming someone else for her station in life relegates the character one more step

backwards into the position of slave, for if she really cannot choose which path to take through her own life, what is her purpose in trying to achieve anything? Piety and conscientiousness, though genuine, are also ploys to make this type of character look important to those around her. This is necessary, for she feels that she has no major role to play except as support to a master, usually a husband, a father, or the forces guiding her. The only real thrust of her life is martyrdom, which she makes very obvious in order to prove her worth.

The second type of woman described in Tremblay's works belongs to another generation. Hélène in En pièces détachées and Linda Lauzon in Les belles soeurs are women trapped by their own feelings of inadequacy into roles that they are not ready to accept. These are women on the brink of revolution, who realize that there must be something better to which they can look forward in this life, instead of eeking out a mundane existence while accepting the myth of a reward in a possibly fictitious heaven some forty years later. Though the members of this generation and group do not always make the right decisions regarding their paths through life, nor do they always act upon their impulses, they have planted the seeds of the future revolt, to be carried out by the upcoming group who will take these seeds of rebellion a step further and act upon them.

Hélène has rebelled against the traditional role of wife and mother but has not completely broken away from the

mold, as she still lives with her family. The major change that has occurred is that her mother has taken over the role of cook, cleaning woman, and teacher for the children, and her husband has given up his right to be breadwinner, abdicating in favour of H  l  ne. This reversal of roles has not made H  l  ne any happier, for she is not doing the type of work that she would like to do. Her current job as a waitress in a smoked meat restaurant on Papineau Street in East-End Montreal is too ordinary and has none of the "glamour," excitement, or "prestige" that her former position as a cocktail waitress in a large bar on the Main Street afforded her. H  l  ne's dissatisfaction with her lot in life is shown visibly in her constant drinking and her release of frustrations when drunk. H  l  ne needs the excuse of being drunk to be able to communicate her feelings and express the resentment bottled up inside of her, building in force daily. Her apologies afterwards are truly contrite, but they are the voice of convention and of society speaking through her. She knows that she must be polite to her mother and be thankful to her and also that she must pity her invalid husband, but her own personality is too strong to allow her to subjugate her own desires for those of others. H  l  ne could be kind to these people and care for them if she herself was happy and fulfilled in her own life. Her misery makes it all the more difficult for her to be sensitive to someone else's problems.

Linda Lauzon, in Les belles soeurs, is in a similar situation to that of the young girl Marie-Louise in Forever

Yours, Marie-Lou, for she is a member of a family that is smothering her individuality and swamping her with responsibility. She is a young and impatient girl who wants to escape from the confines of her crowded and busy home into the exciting and unknown world outside. What Linda does not realize is that, when she breaks the set rules of society, she must be prepared to pay the consequences. Her friend's revealed pregnancy is a serious note that is struck by Tremblay in order to call to mind the dilemmas and problems which a non-conformist has, including the fact that few people will support such individual attitudes and ideals, and that the supportive character must be prepared to be chastized as severely as if she herself had acted on individual impulse instead of conforming to society.

The third type of woman that Tremblay uses as a character model is best exemplified in Carmen, of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou and Sainte Carmen de la Main. She is Tremblay's first character to assert herself and break away from her family in such a way that she can live out her fantasies in the world of reality. The problems that this type of individuality incurs will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

An important element in the lives of all of these types of women characters is their common goal of acceptance and love. Tremblay has made certain to create environments where love and fulfillment are rare, if not impossible. They become such luxuries that they are elevated to a plane far

above their actual importance in the life of a human being. Certainly love and acceptance are necessary to a balanced human existence, but Tremblay makes them into an obsession for his characters, who are starved for such feelings. This unavailability of love makes it, by its absence, the most driving force in the lives of the characters, for if any type of love is offered, it is quickly grabbed as if it might vanish as rapidly as it had appeared. Instantaneous reactions are demanded of Tremblay's characters, for at crisis points in their lives they must choose their own paths according to their personal goals. If a moment is passed up, or if a decision is made too slowly, the development that might have arisen will disappear, taking any potential love along with it.

Carmen and Manon were given love and attention as children according to the moods of their parents, who were themselves unable to find the love that had driven them together in earlier life. Carmen and Manon grew up with warped ideas of the types of love that there are in the world, for, as adults, they both come to reject the normal family atmosphere as the way to gain love.

Hélène, in En pièces détachées, is a woman who defied the conventions of her time and married a man who had gotten her pregnant before their marriage. She states, at one point, that she trapped her husband into marriage in order to prevent any other woman from possessing him. This equation of love and possession is one that is common in the

women of Hélène's group, for they themselves cannot believe that they have actually achieved love, their main goal in life. They feel that because of their insecurity they must tie down the object of their affection before they lose it. Hélène's plan, at the time of the action of the play, has backfired, as it is about twenty years later, and her handsome, virile husband has turned out to be an old man before his time, an albatross hung around her neck, who needs constant care and cannot support his family. Henri's deterioration is as much Hélène's fault as his own, for her castrating power is evident. She makes demands of him even now, blaming him, in her mind, for her fall from "power" at the Coconut Inn, where she might have had a "career" as a bar waitress had he not driven her to drink. In effect, it is Hélène's own self-indulgence that has spoiled her alleged career plans and placed her in the embarrassing position of having to accept a lower paid, lower prestige job in a small restaurant. Her lack of knowledge has led her to believe that possession means love and that love means lust.

The love that Robertine has for her daughter, even when Hélène is abusing her verbally and taking advantage of her mother's sense of responsibility, is strong and cannot be destroyed easily. This love comes from a sense of duty and the old-fashioned family customs that one must love and care for one's offspring when they are not capable of caring for themselves. Hélène does not recognize this as true loving and rejects her mother's ministrations more than once.

When Hélène finally does break down and appreciate her mother's statements as being true and for her own good, it is only because she is weak and has nothing left to which she can cling. Her bravado quickly vanishes once the effects of the alcohol leave her bloodstream, and she is left with only the fear of being alone. Robertine's love becomes the only constant thing upon which Hélène can steady herself, for there is no other force, person, or thing that will ever care for her the way her mother does.

Robertine's love for her daughter is not nourished by acceptance or gratitude, which are rarely forthcoming, but rather by the inbred sense of duty that had been placed in her mind in early childhood. Brought up in the time when traditional values, customs, and religious precepts were accepted readily, Robertine has no other way of reacting to her daughter. The thought of deserting Hélène crosses her mind but only fleetingly, for she could never really consider this drastic move. Because this type of love is a love that comes from a sense of duty, it does not bring the bearer of the love any joy or fulfillment. It is often, as in the case of Robertine, a thankless task that results in frustration and unhappiness.

Love to Tremblay can then be interpreted as anything from an adoring audience cheering Carmen to a lonely woman cradling the gun that has just murdered the woman she loves.² Emotions are always intense, yet their intensity does not qualify them as easily categorizable. The complexity is such

that there are many sides to each emotion, each stemming from the fact that in every character, Tremblay has merged several people, who are separately straining to become whole and lead a fulfilling life. Many of the multifaceted characters are placed into Tremblay's "demi-monde," or world between reality and fantasy, for they become so bizarre in both their appearances and their thoughts that they completely negate all values and rules of conventional society. Tremblay uses transvestites, homosexuals, lesbians, and other extra-societal types to convey his message that society creates only boundaries but will not allow for free expression or diverse interpretations of love, life, and fulfillment within these walls.

One of the goals of the characters in Tremblay's works is to find a niche in life. The men have given up hope of becoming successful in their chosen professions (Henri has resigned from active life in the world, and Léopold has resigned himself to being a cog in a large, controlling machine), and the women are fighting against the typecasting that has assigned them to a role with no future and no chance for personal fulfillment in it. For years, these women have been subjected to comparisons with other groups who are not totally the same as they are and, after much confusion, have come to the realization that the comparisons are ludicrous. Québec itself has long been regarded by the more rebellious Québécois elements as a province forced to emulate the rest of Canada, which is, in the minds

of many, trying to imitate the rich American neighbours to the south. Québec used to look also to France for inspiration, yet the result was virtually the same: a cheaper and less polished version of an imported model, whether it was material goods being copied, or ways of speaking. The women in the plays of Michel Tremblay are the chief sufferers in this game, for they are the only strong salvageable force in Québec as Tremblay sees it, being crushed by the attitudes of the defeatists. He has instilled in them the ambition and stamina to fight for their goals: to be independent individuals, loved and accepted by those people around them.

The women who want to save Québec from total assimilation or annihilation in Tremblay's portrayal of the Québécoise are his favourite characters. They are neither totally in control of their lives nor the situations which they are trying to change, but he draws them with wills that allow them to continue fighting to achieve their goals. He lets them be aware that if they should fail in their bids to free themselves and those around them they would be overcome by the forces in opposition to them.

Two women who accept the challenge of change are Rita Lafontaine and her sister Louise in Demain matin Montréal m'attend. These are women who are brave enough to break all the rules of their small town of St. Martin, Québec and come to Montreal to start careers as singers and dancers in nightclubs. This world, unknown and exciting to these girls from the country, is more than a challenge; it is a

test that has the potential to change their lives and the lives of those to come after them. By ignoring the regulations that claim such a life is not respectable and is filled with sin, the girls claim their right to decide on their own fates, and they then plunge blindly into a world that they cannot hope to comprehend immediately. In this "demi-monde," where all that they have been taught to disdain is touted as "right" and, more importantly, "fun," they must learn to survive by coping with each moment as if it were their first. They must deal with each new question on a personal basis. They must question whether it is right for them to do something according to their personal desires and not whether it would be approved of at home.

The road to final revelation is never simple for these women. They are often not fully aware of what their actual goals are, only of what they are fighting against to achieve them. By negating their former lives, they are giving themselves the chance to create a new life and to find out what it is their lives have long been lacking. The first shock of seeing that they have no clear goal ahead of them is difficult to deal with, but the harder shock to absorb is that the life ahead of them is not the Utopian existence many of them expected it to be. There is no such thing as a perfect life, but the women who have just extricated themselves from an all-consuming, frustrating life do not want to be faced with the realistic notion that their new lives will be at least as difficult to cope with as their former lives.

When Rita and Louise Lafontaine both attempt to assert their individuality and achieve their goals, problems arise for again we are faced with the question of imitation. Louise's dream is almost a carbon copy of her sister's needs, and, while their dreams are both valid desires for change and success as individuals, Tremblay is commenting here on the malady of latching on to another's dream solely because it seems to be attractive.

Rita's attitude is such that she will not share the goal that she has finally achieved over the last few years, through much hard work and sacrifice, in order to help someone who may tarnish her image by providing competition. The Lafontaine sisters are involved in a game of life for only their own benefits and cannot give others a chance to infringe on their newly found territory. Rita has become a part of her new world to such an extent that the "survival of the fittest" credo has pervaded even her sense of love for a blood relation. There are no more family duties in her mind, for she has forsaken this type of responsibility. Her allegiance is now to herself and only to herself. The climax of the drama is a singing, dancing duel, with the sisters fighting for the top position. It is truly pitiful that they have forgotten each other so completely and are battling only an anonymous competitor for the phony affections of a group of mixed-up, unhappy transvestites and lesbians.

The comment here on denying one's roots too strenuously is evident: Tremblay never meant for his people to

totally forget their background, whether it be supportive or destructive to their new goals in life. The fact remains that the forces shaping a personality should not be totally abhorred and ignored in a new life; it is merely the grasping tentacles that cling and hinder development that must be trimmed. The heart and mind must still bear the imprint of this heritage, for it is an integral part of the person. Only an inhuman being could totally cut herself off from her past, with neither visible nor invisible scars.

In dealing with the goals and desires of the various types of Tremblay women, one should not forget his transvestites and their search for identity. In Hosanna, Tremblay explores love and acceptance in the gay community of East-End Montreal, specifically of Hosanna, the transvestite, and his boyfriend, Cuirette, who live together in a small apartment. Hosanna is enamored of the movie star Elizabeth Taylor, and his goal is to achieve a perfect imitation of her movements, dress, and mannerisms. This is another comment on the penchant of many Québécois for hiding their true identities behind a flashy mask or façade. Hosanna's Taylor is arrayed in a glittery second-rate costume, smelling of vulgar perfume. Cuirette (a slang word for leatherette, as "cuir" means leather in French) is an outdated, paunchy motorcycle hood. He has not worked in months and is dependent on Hosanna's money, which is made during the day at a hairdressing salon. Tremblay's emphasis at the climax of the play is on Cuirette's love for the man in-

side of the Elizabeth Taylor make-up. This statement of love is Tremblay's cry to his people to be themselves instead of an imitation. Hosanna must accept himself as an individual and will then receive the love and acceptance he craves from others. Tremblay is trying to arouse the individual to remove his façade and take off his "make-up," as Hosanna finally does.

Among those women who do fail at overcoming their fears of defeat is Francine of En pièces détachées. She is a timid soul who shows the strain of living within an atmosphere of turmoil. Too nervous to work, she is now enrolled in a trade school but sees herself failing at that too. Francine is the type of female who sees failure around her to such an extent that she cannot bring herself to attempt to reach any personal goal, fearing that she, too, will not be successful. The fear of failure is as limiting as the failure itself, and Francine may be seen as the type of woman who is so influenced by the failure of the new experimental changes of the women around her that she can take no positive stimulus from them and ends up stagnating instead of experimenting further.

The bond uniting many of Tremblay's women is the desire to carve out an individual identity in a society where they have been denied this right. The submissive role is no longer typical of these women, or of many women around the world, who long for a life where they will be able to assert their personal hopes and stand proudly in the spotlight as

themselves instead of some other imitated or assumed character. Be these women natural or one of the transvestite men that Tremblay draws upon, they are all possessed of the same strong ambitions that will not let them remain happily fixed to a spot.

The pain in the lives of these characters is explored to its fullest degree by Tremblay, for their smallest hurt is magnified to its largest proportion in his dialogue. We see into the minds of the characters as they admit their shortcomings, their broken hopes, and their death wishes. The pain caused by their methods of escape is shown to be a factor that contributes to the development of their personalities.

What the women in the plays of Tremblay do not see is that, in escaping from their problems, they are often only trading one set of restrictions and routines for another set that is perhaps less structured or less familiar to them. What may seem free and unstructured to one woman may be the very trap that is holding another woman back from fulfilling her life's goal and causing her pain. Though the life in the "demi-monde" of Montreal is far from the life in St. Martin, it is still a structured society and, as such, is subject to hierarchies and power struggles that are as difficult to challenge as those of the conventional society. Though the life is more emotion-charged and allows for more denial of church precepts, the main problems are still present in the minds and the lives of the members of this group.

The life in this "inter-world" is based upon individual desires, for each member lives according to his own personal fantasy. The rules of hierarchy still exist, however, with leaders, followers, and "lackies" in their respective positions. There is still no provision made for those who would change themselves radically and escape from their pasts totally. This is a world where surface glitter can keep its shine only as long as the illusion of the glitter remains in the eyes of the beholder. After that, there is a period of time where the remnants of the former glamour and glitter are so tarnished that they seem to be twice as dirty as the mundane world that has been abandoned, and there is a moment when the inhabitants look at each other and see each other as ugly mockeries of people in the conventional world. This revelation comes not so much as a shock but as an awaited though avoided scene. Though some aspects of former life have been destroyed, there are still the traces that will never be erased, for they form the "inner core" of the character's psyche, a section of the character that will continue to develop until death. This concept of the "inner core" is discussed in more detail as a psychological phenomenon and dramatic tool in a later chapter of the thesis.

The acceptance of the characters in the plays of Michel Tremblay of their true identities and the fact that they cannot change completely is often the necessary incentive needed for them to begin to cope constructively with their

own lives in such a way that they may achieve their goals. Once these characters realize that they themselves cannot be altered, they set about changing the state of affairs around them in an attempt to create a new world for themselves, in which they will seem transformed and be able to act differently. This often involves moving to another locale or changing occupations. This metamorphosis is best exemplified, as described before, in the lives of Carmen, who moves from the conventional world into a world of theatrical excitement and mafioso contacts, and of Rita and Louise Lafontaine, who decide to join the nightclub world of music and dance.

By adapting their dreams and goals to the new ambience which they have chosen, many of the women in Tremblay's plays are able to renew their faith in themselves and gain some confidence in their creative powers. While in their former lives the emphasis was on procreation and obedience, the main thrust of their new lives is survival, creative thought, and ambition. The protection offered by the surroundings in their conventional lives has been replaced by an exciting though sometimes frightening world of impulse and rules that do not follow any logical pattern, except for the concept of "survival of the fittest." In the "demi-monde," the only precept is that of following desire and gaining what was previously denied, by any available means.

The attitude of Tremblay's new woman of Québec, the Rebel, is not so much a selfish one as an attitude that

finally allows her to stop placing other's desires and hopes in front of her own, relegating her own ambitions to a secondary position. The new-found glory of the self is not a destructive force but rather a necessary one that gives these women the courage to challenge the system around them and create new areas of work for themselves outside of the home. Women such as Carmen and Linda Lauzon are not about to put the desires of any man or woman in front of what they themselves intend to accomplish in life. The difference between these two women is that Carmen has acted at the opportune moment while Linda, in her rash acts of defiance of the "system," has cornered herself by supporting a pregnant friend and is, therefore, further cut off from moving forward and bettering herself. Carmen has freed herself to continue along the path which she has devised for herself, while Linda has merely entered into another version of the trap that society has laid for the young individual trying to break out of the pattern set before her.

The way in which these Québécoises look at men is not entirely favourable, for men are seen as the factor that propogates the stronghold held over the women in Québec. Some men in Québec, portrayed by Tremblay, are pawns of the "system," unable to initiate any forceful manoeuvres to better their station in life or to improve their family relationships.

Henri, Francine's father, is Tremblay's epitome of the Québécois who has given up, unable to assert himself in

the wave of power from the new breed of independent Québécoise, who seems to be the controlling force in both the family and Québec as a whole. Henri is a lost cause, willing to fantasize in his own mind and to hide from reality by retreating into a semi-childlike state that is his escape route from the problems of the daily world and the disappointment of not achieving his personal goals.

If they are of the group that is still trapped in society, the women are resentful, at best, of these men or so in love with their men that they are unwittingly falling into the trap that is being set all around them. In several years they, too, will develop into a part of the quiet group of citizens of Québec who do not dare to voice individual opinions if they are contrary to the general consensus of opinions.

The frustration of Tremblay's women is clear. It is not always treated by the characters themselves as a real factor determining the course of their lives. The unspoken feeling, the spoken but misunderstood words--all of these contribute to the overall state of mind of the women in Tremblay's plays. When Marie-Louise states, "Who ever heard of a husband liking TV more than his wife? Well, you've heard of it We've all heard of it . . . ,"³ she is speaking for all the women like her. Though this is not a conscious speech to the women in the audience, Marie-Louise is nevertheless acting as Tremblay's mouthpiece to the world. She is the woman who is symbolizing a state of

being, just as Carmen and Manon are each symbolizing a type. Tremblay has made statements that explain how he wants his women to speak to their counterparts, not through the use of diatribes but, rather, through ideas that are spoken without the characters understanding how universal their meanings are.⁴ The power of Tremblay's women rests in their ability to say what their audiences are thinking, be they English, French, or any other nationality. He touches on their problems, hopes, disappointments, and fears, and shows them, by example, that there are ways to escape and achieve one's goals, be they through easy or difficult channels. The results of this lesson remain to be seen.

CHAPTER III

QUEBEC'S HERITAGE AND THE WOMEN IN FOREVER YOURS, MARIE-LOU

With Tremblay's view of Québec society and its women as a guide, it is now possible to analyse more closely the women in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou. In this play Tremblay has portrayed three female characters from the same family who take different paths through life while trying to achieve their ultimate goals of being loved and accepted as individuals. These common goals are shown to be very different concepts to each of the women, which change according to their stages of development. Through the use of the flashback technique, Tremblay lets his audience see Carmen and Manon as children, gradually forming their ambitions through reactions to life around them. He then allows his audience to see these women as adults with fixed notions of how they want their lives to progress. Tremblay uses Marie-Louise to portray the woman trapped between an inbred sense of duty and a personal longing to be free and fulfilled as an individual. This chapter traces the development of these three characters from the roots of their discontent to their decisions as to what direction their lives will take, as intimated in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou.

The structure of the traditional family in Québec--traditional referring to the rural family of pre-industrial Québec--is a strongly defined form which has influenced both the role of the individual within his family and the individual's role in relation to the society around him as described in Chapter I. It is a generally accepted fact in psychological and sociological study that the individual's personality and the role he chooses to play in life are influenced by his environment and his culture. As society never stagnates, the necessary changes affect both the members of the society and their behavior, which shifts on both personal bases and in intrapersonal relationships until the nature of the society undergoes a total and thorough reorganization. The role of the individual in this new society is almost always different than was his role in the old order, and he must adapt to this new ambience in order to survive.

The traditional Québécois family was originally a patriarchal unit, speaking specifically of the rural family before the massive sociological effects of the industrial revolution made the move to the metropolitan areas of Québec possible and even before these areas had become city-sized. There was a strong bond between family members, based both upon their sense of belonging to the same core group and on their identically cultivated sense of values and morals. Goals were the same for all family members, who wanted both to keep their group together and to be successful in running their farm. This traditional family was comprised of the

Grandfather and his married sons. The Grandfather was both head of the family and manager of the farm. His word was more than law--it was sacred, for he received his authority from God directly.¹ The decisions of the Patriarch were not allowed to be questioned, and their effects were long-term. These decisions were aimed at achieving the purposes of the group and for the collective good of the family, and individual wants and desires were subordinated. The Patriarch ran his family not only to make them financially secure but also to ensure their roles in the surrounding community.

The role of the woman in the traditional family was originally one of a second-class nature. She was not allowed to make personal decisions even when they fell under her jurisdiction, such as household matters, training the younger children, gardening, and working in the fields at harvest time. The manner in which she performed these functional jobs determined the level of the esteem she received in the community. The woman was expected to submit meekly to the sexual desires of her husband as a part of her duties. Refusal to comply with her husband's demands was tantamount to breach of contract. Often the woman had no idea of what to expect, for she had barely been taught the basics of how the species was propagated. Her fear of sexual relations often led to problems between husband and wife.

The wife was to teach the children everything but sexual facts. Premarital abstinence from sexual relations was such an extreme concept that no mention of anything having

the slightest sexual innuendo was ever permitted in front of the unmarried children, lest it arouse their curiosity. It was the husband's job to initiate and educate his bride, as he was to be her master and would train her according to his whims. The element of guilt was generally present in the woman for, after being brought up to fear and be wary of sex, women often found it difficult to understand that it was possible to enjoy a physical relationship after marriage. The unnatural barrier had created a stigma that would continue to echo throughout the centuries. It would lead to the same problems of women being afraid of sex and not knowing how to cope with a husband's desires yet feeling compelled to submit in order to fulfill the Church's request for large families.

The male children had their futures settled: paternal inheritance ensured their vocational training and apprenticeship as well as a guaranteed piece of their father's land to farm. The girls were allowed to have some basic training and schooling only as it was believed that this would help them in their future roles as housewives and mothers.

The social life of the traditional Québécois family was often hard to distinguish from the working life, as the extended family "[consisted] of relatives in direct or collateral lines for at least three generations and including third cousins."² This closeness and sense of identity in the traditional family of Québec came to represent the forces

that were to preserve national and religious values and, therefore, had to be kept strong.

When the society of Québec began to switch over from an agricultural to an industrial society, the structure of the family began to change also. The core of the extended family became more important, and the husband and wife couple began to "rule" their own individual family groups. There was a more even distribution of power within the family, allowing the woman the prerogative to make decisions in certain cases. The relationship between child and parent was beginning to develop into a more balanced situation.

As more families moved from farming communities to the cities, the home became a shelter, representing the security of the old ways, yet modernized. The family was no longer patriarchal but was guided jointly by the couple at its head. As children grew older they, too, shared in the decision-making and were given more responsibilities. The general trend was towards a new matriarchal society. The father was now responsible for providing economic security, while the mother dominated the decisions regarding allocation of funds and was the emotional stabilizer in the home. Women were slowly beginning to work in the cities also, and this increased their role from only that of homemaker to that of homemaker, wife, mother, citizen, and possibly salaried worker.³

The child-parent relationship underwent changes also. The children, now exposed to outside influences, were, in

many cases, beginning to question the decisions and values, both religious and moral, of their parents. It became more difficult to live within the Québécois family because the individual was letting his own views be known and making his own decisions instead of relying on tradition or patriarchal authority; this often caused dissension between family members. Children had to plan their own futures as they had become city-dwellers without the security of a farm to support them. There was no longer a planned social life, and the young were free to choose their own friends and to leave home if they had a steady job and possibilities elsewhere.⁴

The woman, though emancipated in relation to her former life, was now playing a double role. She was in charge of both managing the home and helping to control the finances of her immediate family. Many women were unable to cope with the added responsibilities and remained stuck somewhere between their old traditional role and this new modernized role being offered to them. Many turned to the last stronghold of tradition in Québec, the Roman Catholic Church, for reassurance and security. The Church was not anxious to accept the modernization of Québec culture, for the conservatism of rural society and cultural mores had allowed the Church to dominate and guide the majority of the unquestioning population for many generations. The Church supported these followers who clung to the old style of life--a style that was making them into anachronisms in a new society--and encouraged their continued obedience.⁵

A prime example of this type of woman, who became dominated by the rituals set out by the Church, is Marie-Louise. Marie-Louise is portrayed by Tremblay as a slave to ritual, be it religious or merely the pattern that has developed as her lifestyle. She feels compelled to act upon ideas that have been planted in her mind throughout her own childhood. These ideas have now become, to her thinking, responsibilities that she dares not evade. The sense of guilt at shirking a duty would be harder to cope with for her than the duty itself. Marie-Louise, at the start of the play, states that "Tomorrow we gotta go eat at mother's You think I want to go myself?"⁶ When her husband, Léopold, questions why they must go to visit her mother if she herself does not want to go, Marie-Louise avoids the questions by asking Léopold if he wants more coffee, another set ritual of evasion that she lapses into whenever a problem arises that might challenge routine and present choices that would either be difficult to make or entail change. The role she plays is further emphasized when Marie-Louise chides Léopold about his weight. When he threatens to take matters into his own hands and make himself toast, he is taking away one of her few duties as mother and wife and forcing her to agree to his desires, rather than give up the dubious privilege of being the cook in the family. She answers defensively: "I can make the toast. I'm not sick."⁷ Sickness is the only reason for the husband to take over the wifely duties, for it is her role to serve and not his. Léopold's tirade over

Marie-Louise's morning sickness drives her to retort: "Don't I have the right to be sick?"⁸--the implication being that she must cling to the little rights allowed her in order to keep some shreds of dignity. A woman is permitted to become pregnant--it is virtually her duty--and she is, therefore, allowed to be sick. When remonstrating Léopold about his vomiting, Marie-Louise attacks him by saying, "I didn't marry you to mop up last night's beer," and Léopold counters with the statement "You didn't marry me for much else either."⁹ This alludes to Marie-Louise's aversion to physical relationships, which is taken by Léopold as both an insult to his masculinity and a shirking of one of her wifely duties.

Other rituals that contribute to the action of the play are Marie-Louise's knitting, Léopold's drinking, and the whole family's, especially Marie-Louise's, television watching. As for the women in Les belles soeurs, television is the release from the day's ugliness and mundane chores for these characters. It is the relaxation, the escape that is easily effected by turning a dial and sitting down. The television, the drinking, and the knitting all serve to lessen the frustration that the characters feel in this play and give them a chance to fantasize. Marie-Louise dreams of excitement in front of her television set and creates hopes of a better life while her hands busily knit, a traditional female hobby from the past. Léopold imagines a different lifestyle for himself while he drinks his beer alone at a table in the tavern. The girls dream to themselves, never

daring to allow their aspirations out into the open, therefore, never associating themselves with one object or another for that would be tantamount to a confession of their fantasies. Young girls are usually loath to share their dreams with any one, much less their mother and father, the very beings who seem to them to be their jailers in a world that is never up to the standards set in their dream worlds.

Switching from past to present gives Tremblay the chance to show the development of the two girls from youngsters to young women who have made their fantasies into concrete actions in reality. They have adapted their dreams to the world as much as possible and are, in their adult lives, leading warped versions of the lives they dreamed of as children. The difference in their attitudes towards the past, as symbolized by Marie-Louise, is shown in its raw form when they are children and in its mature and set pattern when they are adults. This will be elaborated upon at a later stage in the thesis, but it is important to note now as the first inklings of rebellion by either daughter are shown in their attitudes towards their parents' lifestyles.

Marie-Louise has been pushed to the limits of her patience on the Saturday described in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou and is answering Léopold's accusations with those of her own. He reminds her that he is the breadwinner and is, therefore, entitled to the largest share of the food and that he should be appreciated, to which Marie-Louise retorts: "If you weren't around, we wouldn't be either, and we'd all

be a lot better off."¹⁰ This is the first mention of the possibility of the family not existing or of changing its traditional form.

Marie-Louise's attitude towards sexual relations is warped by the circumstances of her marriage and by her strict religious upbringing that regards physical relations as a duty in marriage and as a sin outside of wedlock. Sex brings children, and children must be fed. Marie-Louise cannot understand the concept of sex for pleasure, especially not with her husband. Marie-Louise blames the unsuccessful sex life that she and Léopold share on her husband's incompetence, though she herself has no concept of whether he is indeed adept at love-making or not. "I might have enjoyed it, if you'd known how, Léopold,"¹¹ Marie-Louise jibes at her husband, while in actuality she has no basis for comparison and is merely blaming him for something that she does not understand and cannot control. The thought that maybe it is her own lack of knowledge that has contributed to their sexual problems has never crossed the mind of Marie-Louise, though she does admit that

My mother . . . I'll never forgive her for not telling me more All she said was "When he comes near you, close your eyes and go stiff as a board. You have to put up with it, all of it It's your duty." Well I did my duty, goddamn it! And you hurt me, you bastard.¹²

As a result of his wife's unwillingness to co-operate, Léopold has been forced to seek his pleasure elsewhere, and, in the same way that Carmen chides Manon for almost living

the life of a cloistered nun, he mocks Marie-Louise's repressed sexuality: "You're not a pig, but you're plenty screwed up, eh, Marie-Louise? You're not a pig, but in a way you'd like to be one, eh, my sweet Marie-Lou?"¹³ Marie-Louise's view of love and sexual relationships is so warped by her dreams of story-book perfection that she cannot deal with a real-life physical encounter.

Manon's first initiation to sexual relationships came at the age of fifteen or sixteen, one night when she walked into her parents' bedroom in the middle of what she assumed was a fight because of all the noise and movement. The experience both frightened and disgusted her to such an extent that, from that point onwards, the whole idea of letting a man touch her became revolting and unbearable. Manon, as an adult, remembers hearing Léopold tell Marie-Louise on many occasions that she was his wife and must obey him even though she used to protest that she did not want to be touched by him. This attitude--that marriage is a slave-master relationship--is a common theme in the plays of Tremblay, for we see the dual standard of living and privileges throughout his works.

This dual standard is visible in En pièces détachées, where it is the women--Robertine, Hélène, and Francine--who are left to cope with the situations after their men have been violent or have given up trying to earn their daily bread. Though the men have abdicated their powers and responsibility, they still maintain their sham of power and try to order

their women about. In Les belles soeurs husbands do not appear, but we hear of their laziness and their attempts to have the final say in all matters without doing any share of the work. The women in these plays do not let the men carry through their plans without first putting up a verbal fight. Though many of them would not dare to disobey their husbands, for their conditioning is too complete, they do realize that there is a problem present and that marriage has not turned out ideally for them. For many of the women in Tremblay's plays, marriage was to have provided the sought-after escape from their lives in their own families, which were usually crowded, noisy, and full of responsibilities. Marie-Louise sums up this attitude in one of her monologues about her marriage at an early age to Léopold:

. . . Sure, I knew what I wanted, I wanted to get out of that house as fast as I could. The place was crawling with people, there was no room to breathe, and we were so poor . . . I was ashamed. I had to get out. It's true, I met lots of boys, but he was the nicest, and I just thought well, I'll be able to move to a new place, an emptier place . . . Cleaner, quieter. I didn't know I had to let my husband do with me as he pleased . . .¹⁴

The position of a young woman at that time in Québec was not enviable, for the Québécoises were going from the frying pan right into a burning hot fire. These women were escaping from the clutches of their large families only to be burdened, all too soon, by one of their own from which there was to be no respite for the next twenty or thirty years. Baby brothers and sisters were quickly replaced by little sons and daughters. The domineering mother and the strict father were now replaced

by a husband dictating the moves and responsibilities of his new wife and doling out the household money with an eye to his beer-drinking evenings and his nights out on the town with the boys. From little girl with no privileges at home to little wife with even fewer privileges in her own home: this was the step that Marie-Louise was taking when she chose to marry. As a girl she had spent most of her life in the country and was unaware of the drudgery and mundane existence that a poor city life entailed. Even the poorest of families in the country were allowed a measure of freedom--from urban stress, if from nothing else. In the city, the dingy, grey row housing in the crowded tenement areas were enough to make even the heartiest country girl pale and wan.

Carmen's reaction to her parents' "slave-master" situation was quite different from Manon's. Hearing of Manon's episode of seeing her parents in the act of sex affected Carmen less as she was only hearing of the escapade second-hand and had already formed her own opinions of the lives her parents were leading. Her attitude, as a grown woman who has experienced similar situations, is now that the sex Manon witnessed as a child was defective because the participants did not know how to do it beautifully. She defends her father's drunken ramblings at the moon, thinking them poetic, and romanticizing him in her mind, while she rejects the steadfast practicality of her mother.

What's so bad about talking to the moon? You should try it yourself. It's better than sitting in that chair telling yourself stories

about your wicked Papa who made you so miserable.¹⁵

Here, once again, we see Carmen's defense of her own type of fantasy world, which she feels is more valid than that of her sister. Carmen reaches for the moon and finds that endeavour a more real occupation than her sister's clinging to the shadows of the past. Carmen's fantasies are indeed more alive, colourful, and active, but one must not forget that she, too, is trapped by her dreams into a never-ending struggle to achieve them in reality. Reaching for the moon is a feasible dream as long as the character realizes the physical impossibility of the act and regards it as an image of his hopes within reality. Both Carmen and Manon are trapped in their dreams and actually believe in them literally.

Carmen has no patience for Manon's thoughts and her attempts at sympathy-mongering, in the same way that Léopold had no time for the complaints of Marie-Louise. Manon, however, is only the shadow of her mother, and, though the format of the situation is the same--the voice of action chiding the voice of dreams and internal suffering--Carmen really does have a basis for trying to get her sister to stop feeling sorry for herself. Manon has the power within her, albeit trapped, to start a new life free from the problems of the past. Manon rejects Carmen's suggestions and opts instead for a phantasmagoric dream of love and sex with a god who is meant to love only her on a personal basis instead of being the savior of all mankind. Manon has taken her mother's dream and turned it into her own concept of religion

that excludes all other human beings. Manon's interpretation of her mother's religion is based upon her fear of human contact and a need to replace human compassion and live with something less ephemeral and less prone to change. The fear of danger and excitement based upon human variables is the outcome in Manon's life of Marie-Louise's refusal to deal with life's problems on a realistic level, for Manon has turned her mother's foibles and fears into an individually-based religion that worships alone, loves alone, and suffers alone.

Marie-Louise feels that, in the twenty years she and Léopold have been married, the four times that they have made love have been as pleasurable as being beaten up, with each episode resulting in a surprise pregnancy. The thought of abortion frightens Marie-Louise, as an adherent to the strict bans by her religion on such things, and she rejects the idea completely. She knows that she is too old to have a baby without chance of complications yet refuses to consider abortion as an alternative: "It's too late Besides, I'd never do that It goes against nature."¹⁶ Léopold has suggested this route before to Marie-Louise, when she was pregnant with Roger, their youngest child. This time she has waited until the safe period for abortion has passed before telling Léopold of her condition. That she would wait this long and not fear to tell him of her state is further proof that Marie-Louise does not think that Léopold would ever cause her real bodily harm. She will not

tell her husband that she actually wants this child, that she has dreamt of bringing it up totally on her own, with no outside influences to interfere. Marie-Louise is willing to be "buried in shit,"¹⁷ as Léopold phrases it, rather than give up her unborn child. She is willing to sacrifice the most meagre of comforts and see her family driven further into the mire of poverty rather than go against what she claims are her religious beliefs. Marie-Louise, though she truly does believe in the teachings of her Church, is using them here as an excuse to do what she herself desires, instead of bowing to the will of her husband.

Marie-Louise has magnified her hatred of her husband to such an extent that everything becomes solely his fault. When Léopold says, "All the shit we gotta take, it's always my fault," Marie-Louise answers, "Yes. It's always your fault, Léopold, always. I kill myself trying to get us out of this mess and look what happens. Thanks to you we end up further in the hole."¹⁸ This blaming of one's troubles on other people is the concept I will term the "scapegoat mentality." This type of person, who uses the scapegoat to alleviate his personal feelings of guilt and responsibility, is further developed in another chapter of this thesis.

Marie-Louise points out the weaknesses in Léopold, mocking him for being afraid to ask his boss for a long-awaited raise. She accuses him of beating the children because they are so much smaller and weaker than he is, while he is actually a big coward, afraid to fight someone his own

size or more powerful than he is. Marie-Louise states:

You're all alike. You dump on us 'cause we're weaker than you, then you let the jerks on top dump all over you. Stop taking it out on us and go after them for a change.¹⁹

Marie-Louise can see the weakness and fear of the outside world in her husband but cannot see it in herself. She says to Léopold, "You'd like that, wouldn't you, to spend the rest of your life blindfolded?"²⁰ while she, too, is blindfolded and set apart from the rest of the world. Marie-Louise sees Léopold's escape route from his traditional duties and the cares of the real world and confronts him with it, never realizing that she, too, would like to hide from reality. She sees his drinking and bravado as the equivalent of hiding under a blanket. The frustration left by Léopold's thwarted escape routes does not penetrate Marie-Louise's mind, for she is so bent on escaping herself, through pity of others, that she cannot see past surface activity to the action that is taking place. Marie-Louise never sees herself as the cause of her husband's frustration, which is the reason for his violence. Léopold must release his tension in one way or another, and his fits of physical action, such as upsetting the kitchen table or beating one of his children, is the only way within the boundaries of the law that he can safely keep his sanity, or the remnants thereof, intact. The final act of Léopold, his murder of Marie-Louise and their youngest child, is the ultimate act of desperation that he could not contain within himself any longer. When he realizes

that there is indeed no other way to escape from the family style which he feels is stifling him, Léopold chooses to end the situation in the only complete way that he can contrive.

Marie-Louise is happy to see her husband's fits of violence and anger as uncontrolled madness. She believes that they are the force which will set her free and allow her to live in her own version of peace:

I'll live here all by myself and watch television. I'll keep the baby with me
And I'll knit I won't stop until the
day that I die I'll just go on
knitting Oh Lord, what peace!²¹

The tranquilizing effect of Marie-Louise's knitting and the fantasy world of the television contribute to the picture of Utopia that Marie-Louise has conjured in her mind. People will visit, and she will tell them stories about her crazy husband; some of the stories will have truth in them, while others will be fabrications. Her friends will then all feel sorry for her, and she will be content, loved, and accepted. Marie-Louise resents being married to Léopold, but, as with the thought of sleeping in the living room, she cannot even consider divorce or separation as the children, neighbours, and Church would be scandalized. Disapproval and ostracism would be imminent. Marie-Louise recognizes the mess that Léopold has made of his life: "You're just a guy who's screwed up his life, and who's taking it out on his family instead of himself . . ." ²²; however, she refuses to see how she is doing nearly the same thing with her own life. Marie-Louise calls her emotions suffering and Christian martyrdom

instead of selfishness and insensitivity.

Marie-Louise can only react to her husband's accusations of her frigidity by laughter. The gist of his statements is certainly true, but she is not able to admit this or even consciously realize their value. In the same way that Manon cannot see her own craving for love and sexual contact, Marie-Louise refuses to accept her own desires, for they seem dirty to her. She sees the entire concept of marriage as faulty and craves some form of togetherness that will not leave her feeling unfulfilled and alone. She is the victim of her own thoughts and fantasies, that imprison her and do not allow her the room to develop or grow, forcing her into the role and pattern of life that she has been raised to accept as her duty in life. She realizes that her loneliness is a result of not being able to trust others enough to bare her soul and express what she truly feels or desires to be. She wants a new child because it will be a new body upon which she can lavish her repressed love:

. . . No one else will touch it It'll
be my baby, mine alone All mine
At last I'll be able to love someone.²³

When Marie-Louise realizes the futility of this desire, that she will never be able to isolate this new child from all the pitfalls around it, she decides to give up her battle to free herself from the responsibilities weighing her down. When Marie-Louise accepts Léopold's offer to go for a drive, she is well aware of what the consequences might be should he decide to take the initiative and act according to his

desires and impulses. She has been goading him on all morning about being a coward, and now, at last, he may act instead of just talking about how he would like to be dynamic. Tremblay has Léopold and Marie-Louise look at each other for the first time in the action of the play during this last interchange of dialogue. By finally listening to each other and hearing what the other person is saying, and by thinking about the other person's meaning, Marie-Louise and Léopold have passed a barrier that has held them back for all of their married life. Communication has finally occurred, and it will, ironically, be the cause of their deaths. Their legacy of not being able to speak to another person has been propagated, however, and will live on and thrive in their children.

The next segment of this chapter will deal with Carmen and Manon and will show their development in relation to the roles for which they were bred. These two young women were brought up by parents unable to communicate, and the effects of this problem on both women were manifold.

As a child, Carmen was trapped into a role by the circumstances around her. She and her sister, Manon, were forced to hide in doorways and to crouch behind chairs in order to find out any personal facts about a man-woman relationship. Though both sisters heard and saw the same things, the facts registered quite differently in their minds. Carmen saw herself being groomed for a position similar to that of her mother, a submissive role that would have given

her no chance of development as an individual. She was forced to be silent and accept the abuse of her father. Carmen resented being kept in the dark and was anxious to gain first-hand knowledge of all of the taboo subjects of which she had heard. Instead of growing up with a distaste for sex and a fervent love of religious ritual, just the opposite happened. Through some perversion of her mother's teachings, Carmen gradually came to reject all that her mother saw as good and holy for she believed that this would lead her into the same sterile and repressed life that her mother was forced to live. By rejecting these life-negating forces, Carmen began her escape from the tradition-ridden role about to be thrust upon her. She viewed her mother's role as being much like the role of a nun in the Church--isolated from the modern world around her, living a life of fantasy and repression. Tremblay then shows us an adult Carmen to whom liberation comes to mean the ability to make her own personal decisions as to which directions her personal life will take without the nagging fears and influences of tradition and of her immediate family. Escape to Carmen is now more than a physical manoeuver: it represents a lifting of boundaries of both thought and action, which would free her to climb to pinnacles of ecstasy and intensity of passions that before had only been hers in dreams. Though these escape routes are often only fantasies to the adult Carmen and become sordid and ugly in actuality, the fact that she is getting a long dreamt of chance to execute her

dreams is enough to justify her actions to herself.

To her public, the adult Carmen projects an image of strength and confidence, though in her own mind she is anything but secure. Still searching for a situation and lifestyle that will bring her happiness, Carmen is as confused about her status as when she was a child living at home. The major difference from her previous life is that, now, she has the freedom to use her body and personality as she sees fit instead of being forced to conform to a role not of her own choosing. Carmen is now responsible to herself and takes the blame for any unhappiness or problems that arise in her life.

Carmen sees her mother's life and role as being a repetitive cycle, always being pushed into a subservient traditional position, forced to submit to her superior, whether it be her parent, her husband, or her Church. Marie-Louise's life is filled with resentment, and Carmen cannot see herself fitting into a similar mold. She sees Marie-Louise hating her man because, as discussed previously, she is forced to worship him and unquestioningly abide by his decisions. She sees the rage that is evoked when Marie-Louise does something minutely against Léopold's wishes (for example, buying "crunchy" peanut butter for a few pennies more than "smoothie" peanut butter would cost), while Léopold splurges on beer at the neighbourhood tavern. Carmen is disgusted with her mother for accepting this dehumanizing treatment with barely a protest. The need to internalize resentment and aggravation seems ridiculous to Carmen, who

cannot stifle her own emotions, much like her father. Carmen does, to an extent, take after Léopold for she possesses the same desire for recognition and the need to be adored. Carmen, however, channels these traits into different outer manifestations. Carmen chooses the life of a singer, gaining a small degree of fame in this way and finding an outlet for her excess energies and need for physical attention. Tremblay consciously has Carmen echo her father's speech patterns throughout the action of the play, taunting Manon much as Léopold was wont to taunt Marie-Louise:

Carmen: Jesus Christ, will you let me finish?
 Manon: And your language is as bad as you are.
 Carmen: I can't get two bloody words in. Look,
 I never asked you to be like me.²⁴

Just as Léopold caroused in the bar with or without his cohorts and mocked his wife for her religious sentiments, Carmen is a member of a group that favours dancing and drinking and makes fun of Manon's religious dedication and distaste for the life of a singer. Carmen's rejection of religion comes after she loses all respect for its rituals and set priorities, which she sees as a trap. She tries to talk Manon into leaving the Church and finding a new religion in which to worship, preferably one based upon the celebration of the self, both body and mind.

Carmen understands her mother's role but refuses to cope with the idea of being cast similarly. Her instincts are those of a fighter and, coupled with a fierce ambition, will not allow her to accept anything that she does not fully intend to embrace on her own. The sense of pride in

herself and confidence in her ability to survive--if not succeed totally--on her own in the city give Carmen the drive to break away from the traditional women's role that would have been hers. The death of Marie-Louise is the moment of rebirth for Carmen for she no longer has to deal with the burden of her immediate past; that is, she is free of the living ghosts behind her momentarily, and she is no longer actively hindered in her bid for freedom and individuality. Carmen realizes that she will never be able to rid herself totally of the influences of her background, but, for the moment, her own mind has full rein of her actions, and she is able to make the long dreamt of move. The shadow from the past that remains, in the form of Manon, is not a hindrance to Carmen in her new life but acts rather as a warning of what she might have become. Carmen uses the frigidity of the women in her family as inspirations for her to grow and reach out in directions of which they never would have dared to conceive.

Carmen regards Manon as sterile from the point of view that she has never allowed the stimuli of the outside world to penetrate her cocoon. Both Marie-Louise and Manon are so far removed from the day-to-day activity of the world of Carmen and the world of sexuality that, to them, it seems to be a dream world full of sordid and dirty things of which they wish to know nothing. This entire realm of physicality is foreign to them, and any reference to it is regarded as blasphemous. In Damnée Manon, sacrée Sandra, we come to see

that Manon does indeed have physical urges and longings, but, in this play, she is portrayed as a woman totally unaware of her own drives. While Manon may be labelled repressed, Marie-Louise must be recognized as frigid for she knows of sex and yet refuses to accept its place in her life, both shunning and fearing it.

The whole realm of popular music and of theatre have long been associated by the deeply religious with evil, decadence, and perversion of morality. Healthy work, respectable and steady, such as farm or office work, were the only jobs considered fit for the young girl from an upstanding family who wanted her to find a husband with a good background and a future. This route is seen by Carmen as an extension of the boring and routine life that her non-working mother has led, with only minor variations and improvements. Emancipation, to Carmen, means actually trying to change one's status in life instead of merely translating the problems and limitations of one role into the terms of another. She wants a life that will fulfill the fantasies of her childhood and not prove them to be shallow and ridiculous. Adulthood, to Carmen, means realizing dreams and not outgrowing them. The teachings of her early life are not a deterrent to her ambitions for she is a new breed of Québécois woman and a rebel. She has a lack of respect for outdated rules yet is not wholly in control of the powers driving her. This results in a life which, though unchained by the past, is often still unhappy and unfulfilling.

This new type of woman is reflected in other Tremblay plays, notably Demain matin, Montréal m'attend, where, as mentioned earlier, two girls from the country are portrayed at different stages in their own emancipation. These girls are shown as still trying to understand how to achieve fame and happiness while keeping their self-respect and joy for living intact. These women are different from Carmen in that they are totally self-oriented while Tremblay has Carmen develop into a woman who tries to raise others to her level of awareness and stop them from continuing in the role that she has already evaded. The will to rebel against traditionalism and conservatism is explained in Demain matin, Montréal m'attend by showing the lure of the "demi-monde" in Montreal. Tremblay places the new individual Québécoise that he has created in the midst of this new world and has her use it as a means to achieve her goal of love and acceptance in life. Tremblay consistently uses desperate women, unhappy with their position in life, and plunges them into new situations with which they are unable to cope easily, forcing them to fight or be overcome in the deluge of new sensations and challenges. In Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, we are given an optimistic vision of what may develop in Carmen's new life, for she is the one force in the play that is hopeful and reveres life on earth instead of hating it. It is only in the later play, Sainte Carmen de la Main, that Tremblay dashes her hopes and gives her a new role, that of prophetess. In this latter play, we see a disillusioned

Carmen fighting to destroy the complacency of the Québécois around her.

Carmen comes to have no faith in anyone save herself. She sees no sense of purpose in relying on a god or other human beings around her for help in a world where only the fittest survive by crushing the weak with their powers, both psychological and physical. Strength and ambition are Carmen's tools, and they push her forwards, allowing her only fleeting glimpses at the past as reminders of the pallid, alternative life open to her. Carmen has chosen the uncertain life instead of the plodding existence of the rest of her family. She prefers to discover new ways of seeing old things, or waking up with awe every morning. She values the newness of experiences, even if they pose gigantic problems and cause her heartache, for by living each day on its own merit she is fulfilling the potential of each day's worth. Carmen is not living for or through the past. She is not wasting the present by waiting patiently for a better future in another world. She is, instead, trying to possess as much of the present as she can manage, letting the overflow spill around her. She is emotionally alive, feeding her senses until they would burst, receiving and taking from all of the stimuli around her, ignoring nothing. She is not content to relive experiences or wallow in memories like her sister. Instead, she uses the past as a stepping stone to the present and then tries to lock the door behind her. The only sense of longing for the past can be seen in her return to

visit Manon, and this is quickly dispelled in her mind as a mistaken myth of former security. Carmen realizes at once that her sister has become trapped by the very forces from which she, Carmen, has attempted to escape. Manon has succumbed to the lure of polishing memories of childhood and family life until they shine with glowing scenes of a loving home and a warm, concerned, protective mother. Carmen sees through this sham and tries to bring Manon back to earthly reality. The irony of this situation is that Carmen, in trying to bring Manon out of what she regards as a dream world, has herself fallen prey to a similar "demi-monde" of fantastic occurrences. Manon maintains that she is not living in a dream world and rejects her sister's life to the same extent that Carmen dislikes Manon's world. Manon states, in Damnée Manon, sacrée Sandra,

Les rêves, c'est mauvais. Les rêves, c'est des
affaires qu'on peut pas contrôler, pis des
affaires qu'on peut pas contrôler, c'es mauvais. 25

Manon then asserts that she never dreams. Both Carmen and Manon are unaware of the dream quality of their lives and are both convinced that they lead the life of realistic human existence. The main difference between Carmen and Manon is that Carmen is living out her fantasies while Manon is content to dream them, locked away in a vacuum, creating a separate reality from the rest of the world.

By joining the carnival world of the theatre, Carmen is, in a sense, still avoiding reality, but in a different way than either Marie-Louise or Manon. Instead of retreating

into a world of purity and perfectness, Carmen chooses the "demi-monde," where fantasy becomes real. Her role is shaped by the dreams in her mind. When she performs she becomes a god, revered and splendid in her finery, set up on a pedestal. She is transfigured and rises to the trance state that prayer used to give Marie-Louise and now gives Manon. Carmen's sensual awareness and fondness for bright colour and loud music are all a part of her vivid imagination brought to life. Carmen grows through the love of the men in her audiences, basking in their love much as Marie-Louise wanted to benefit from the love of her unborn child and Manon wants to benefit from the love of her Jesus and the spirit of her "saintly" mother. These women are still trapped by their need for love and acceptance no matter what their level of emancipation is. Carmen has escaped from the past on one level, but she is still haunted by the remnants of the past culture. The need for love and acceptance is so basic to her that she craves it without understanding it. Her type of love is not a personal one, and, in this way, she is absolved of the past limitation of marriage and fidelity. The love she craves in her new role is mankind's love and acceptance. She wants to be recognized as a star and as someone special who is elevated above the level of a common human being.

Carmen and Manon, because of their different personalities, are trapped by two kinds of problems. Manon is trapped by the past in that she cannot let go of it and forget the hurt that it has caused her, preferring to relish

this hurt and use it as a form of self-punishment. It is almost as if Manon feels guilty for not dying with her mother and younger brother and must devote herself to mourning for them and glorifying their memories for the remainder of her life. Carmen, on the other hand, is held in check by the forces around her that refuse to recognize her talents and will not give her enough independence to fly freely above the restrictions of society. Carmen would like to be famous and rich enough to be able to make some rules of her own and to be able to tell the majority of the people around her to leave her alone. In addition to this lack of influence and power over her present life, Carmen is still beset by guilt feelings and a sense of responsibility towards her sister, who she feels is mentally unbalanced. Carmen cannot erase all traces of her family background, and, while Manon is still alive, she cannot ignore her own roots, personified in the form which Manon has adopted. Though Carmen has chosen to leave her home, she tries to explain to Manon that escape is not necessarily a physical act. She asserts: "You don't have to go past the front door, Manon. You just have to break loose from the shit that's dragging you down."²⁶

Tremblay has pointed out that

. . . what the people didn't see is that she [Carmen] was dressed as a western singer, which is something that one doesn't see in Québec. She went out of her family which is good, but the door she took was the wrong door, because she disguised herself in another country's culture.²⁷

In this way Tremblay is commenting on the futility of Carmen's

situation. By trying to escape from the past she is forced to construct a new life but has nothing left out of which to build. Once the past has been left behind, the new type of Québécois woman in the mid-sixties was faced with a dilemma: should she emulate the English and try to assimilate with them, or should she strive to achieve the dubious class of those Québécois who modelled themselves after the Parisians, a society which appeared to them as more elite and established? This was not an easy choice to make, and Tremblay, instead of forcing Carmen to take one direction or the other, prolongs her doubt and insecurity by thrusting her into a "demi-monde" where neither group is a major power. In this world of dreams that are acted out, Carmen plays the role which she has fantasized about after being fed images by the movies and trashy magazines. Her vision of success and stardom take shape in the form of a country and western singer, which is not a Québec character-type. After a childhood where glamour was a commodity sold mainly in English and generally as a cheap imitation of an American counterpart, as discussed previously, Carmen is forced to translate her concept of fame into an incongruous character.

Tremblay has put no male figures with a strong sense of identity into his plays. By dressing Carmen as a cowboy-type, he may be expressing his contempt for Québec's former lack of strong male leadership.²⁸ This may then be interpreted as Tremblay's projection at the time of what the new dominant figure in Québec would look like, taking over the

traditional male roles of innovator and provider. Cowboys have long been the symbol of heroism, renowned for their strength, virility, stamina, and individuality, and Tremblay is well aware that Carmen's battle will call on most of these qualities if she is to succeed in achieving her own goals of being loved and accepted as an individual.

As this sense of personal identity developed in Québec in the nineteen-sixties, characters of the type such as Carmen began to evolve into what I have termed "the new breed of Québécoise," who were no longer afraid to approach society with challenges. With the support of others in her generation, Carmen, in the mid-seventies, had developed to the extent that she could face her associates as an individual capable of making the choices that would shape her life, instead of relying on the Church or forces of tradition to guide her hand. Her escape has been successful, leaving her free to start a new life in new surroundings. Her adjustments and further challenges to society will be discussed in a later chapter.

Of the four characters in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, Manon is the most problematic. Carmen makes her bid for freedom by leaving the family fold. Marie-Louise is a product of the past, firmly rooted and unwilling to live in the present. Léopold is a dethroned king and also a product of the past. Manon, however, is caught between the present and the past in a time-warp which allows for no personal development. The older she becomes, the closer she gets to the events of the

past, until she is virtually living the life that her mother led, waiting, as Carmen tauntingly points out, for a man to come into the room and abuse her. Manon does not see this man harming her but, rather, lifting her and crushing her to his chest.

Reprenez-moé. Dans votre sein. Reprenez-moé.
Reprenez-moé. Dans votre sein.²⁹

Manon never tells Carmen of this fantasy, and Carmen assumes that Manon shares the wish of their mother to be given a reason to make herself a martyr and pitied by those around her.

As a child, Manon idolized Marie-Louise and saw her as both martyr and loving mother. This combination conjured within her as yet undeveloped concept of religion a figure that was strong, sympathetic, and loving, yet was forced to fight a devil figure constantly and protect those less powerful beings around her. As she grew older, Manon began to see her father, Léopold, as this demon who was plaguing the forces of good in the family's life and ultimately was able to destroy them. As she matured Manon embroidered this story of the saintly mother into a model for her lifestyle, until, as an adult, her waking thoughts are shown to be devoted to reminiscences of her past life with her mother and prayers for her in heaven. Manon's religion, while appearing to be that of her mother, is actually a personal, isolated religion where Marie-Louise has taken on the proportions of a god-figure and is revered as a saint by her daughter.

The weaknesses of Marie-Louise and Léopold are mirrored in their children. Marie-Louise's inability to accept physical attention and her fear of the unknown are reflected in Manon's refusal to choose a path leading forwards into the world of the present and the future and her abhorrence of men.

The overriding reason for Manon embracing the religion of her mother is that it is the one avenue she has discovered that leads backwards into the past. Afraid of a future where she would have to be independent and forge new trails in order to survive, Manon retreats into the isolation of a religious cocoon. Once the threats of external pressure and strange stimuli have been quieted, she is free to slip into a coma, surrounded by the comfort of past pleasant memories, and driven to prayer by the harsher reminders of the life that she once led. People from her childhood take on the coats of Good and Evil according to the way in which her religious tradition-oriented attitude views them. Her father's anti-religious view places him among the fallen beings on earth. To Manon, he seems to be determined to capsize the comfortable boat of tradition and purity by sullyng it with heresy from the world of immorality. Manon has taken her mother's escape route and built it into her own universe. There are no men for Manon to evade, no children for her to raise traditionally, in competition with the call of the new permissive style of living. In Damnée Manon, sacrée Sandra, Manon has become a recluse,

alone in her world of statues, hymnals, and memories of her sheltered childhood, forced to transfer her frustrated passions into hatred for her father and love for her mother. Manon rejects spontaneity or any other vital force.

The "demi-monde" of tarnished glitter and shallow pleasure holds little interest for Manon. She regards Carmen's escape with contempt and disgust yet does not realize that her own method of release is as empty and futile as her sister's. There is no fulfillment for Manon in her life of piety. Her reaching out to Jesus is as much a clutching at love as is Carmen's reaching out to all the nameless men in her audiences. This reaching out is an echo of both the lives of Marie-Louise and Léopold, who have unsuccessfully tried to reach each other throughout their dismal marriage, which was operating on two different and non-intersecting planes. As mentioned before, the dramatic structure of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou is such that Marie-Louise and Léopold never look at each other, never speak to each other, but are constantly talking past each other in half-hearted efforts to communicate. The characters in this play are unable to reach out and touch other people and are consequently forced into shells where they live out their lives in misery and solitude. The only communication allowed these characters is occasionally through physical contact, for it is simpler to touch with the hands than to penetrate the mind or soul of one who is lonely. It is easier for Tremblay's characters to relate to each other through sexual encounters (Pierrette Guérin in

Les belles soeurs), drinking (Hélène), masquerading as another person (Hosanna, Rita Lafontaine alias Lola Lee), or dreaming of a better life (Carmen).

Manon attempts to find peace by indiscriminately refusing anyone access to her body as opposed to what she sees in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou as Carmen's exploitation of her body. Because of her deep ties to tradition, Manon is a part of the negative forces operating within society that deny progress. She lacks power because of her unwillingness to directly relate to other living beings, choosing instead to ally herself with the dead, with whom it is easier to come to terms. She studies them and their actions as if they were precious artifacts known only to a chosen few. Manon cherishes her role much as Marie-Louise revelled in the role that she had chosen even though it caused her pain. Pain seems to be felt as deeply as joy for it creates an intensity of feeling that both Manon and Marie-Louise have not been able to elicit through other stimuli, such as physical contact or love from other human beings. The main difference between Manon's cause and that of Marie-Louise is that Manon's cause is based on the dead while Marie-Louise's was based on the living. Manon sees her dead family, her mother in particular, as the only people capable of giving her love, peace, and security, and she conveniently forgets the non-saintly qualities in her mother.

Tremblay's attitude to his characters is often hidden well below the surface. He understands Manon's sit-

uation and sees it as representative of the group of Québécois who cannot break away from old traditions and are unable to communicate with the new world because of the ties that remain. His sympathies, however, are not with the simpering Manons of Québec society but, rather, with the Carmens. He sees Carmen as the character who has tried the hardest to change and improve herself and to progress though she stumbles often.

Manon has always been afraid of her father and tried, as a child, to avoid anything having to do with him. When relatives used to speak of her resemblance to her father, Manon reacted violently. She would not play the role of the father when she and Carmen used to play house, throwing temper tantrums if Carmen ever tried to claim the role of the mother. "He was a crazy bastard, and I didn't want to look like him,"³⁰ stated Manon, while Carmen, always more tolerant of her father, defended him by saying, "He was no worse than anyone else, Manon. Just a little more fed up, that's all."³¹ Carmen's sympathies lay with her father and stemmed from the times as a child that she saw her mother being neurotic in her fears of her own husband. Carmen understood instinctively that her mother was unbalanced and could not deal with the physical side of a marriage relationship. She saw that her mother was liable to exaggerate the harm that Léopold was allegedly about to inflict upon her. Carmen, as a child, made a mockery of Manon's high-strung nervousness and was constantly called upon to reassure her sister that Léopold

was certainly not in the process of murdering their mother: "You worry when they shout, you worry when they whisper Relax, for God's sake" ³² It is Carmen who asks her mother, after one incident where Léopold has just had a minor fit at the kitchen table, ". . . why did you say he was going to kill you?" ³³

Manon's dreams of becoming the woman she had fantasized of being started at an early age. In Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, Manon says, "I wanted so badly to look like her . . . but my dream was always shattered." ³⁴ This dream of being like her mother and the mistrust of her father, the only male with whom Manon had had any strong or prolonged contact, defined Manon's attitude towards men in her adult life.

Between the adult Manon's strict religious beliefs and upbringing, and her negative reaction to men, lies a basic fear of change. With her guardian and mentor Marie-Louise dead and her cohort Carmen changed beyond recognition, there is no more retaining wall left for Manon to lean upon. All her sources of comfort, security, and inspiration have been abruptly obliterated, and, rather than forge ahead with an optimistic outlook, Manon chooses to clutch at any familiar link to the past ambience that she can reconstruct.

As a clinging and dependent person Manon cannot accept being cast adrift in a world which she neither understands nor accepts. Naive enough to believe that her mother's magnified fantasies of the evils present in the modern world are true, Manon regards her sister as a whore. She feels

that, if she were to attempt to take part in the life of the outside world actively and zealously, she, too, would become tainted. Instead, Manon constructs an elaborately structured personal world with bits of her mother's life, which fit together to form a bundle of isolated neuroses that feed off of the dreams of the dead and the rules of the long forgotten generations, instead of the ideals of the living.

Manon is an example of what Tremblay sees as Québécois people afraid of what change will bring. Still dominated by traditional beliefs, many will not abandon the old ship even though it may be sinking rapidly. A sense of loyalty to the old order is used as an excuse to ignore progress, calling it heresy and labelling its purveyors as rabble-rousers. Tremblay is both mocking this attitude and abhorring it. He is asking his audiences to pity those who adhere to this mode of thought for they are not happy in their martyrdom. Unable to stop change from occurring, they sit forlorn in a stagnant pool of memories, repeating outmoded moralities and clichéd criticisms of their more progressive counterparts.

This chapter has dealt with the changes in the lives of the women in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou as they attempt to come to grips with their heritage. The next chapter will further these ideas, putting them into the context of psychological interpretation. The way in which the characters relate to each other and the new world around them will be dealt with in depth.

CHAPTER IV

THE "INNER CORES" OF CARMEN AND MANON

Once the three women of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou have made their decision as to the direction that their adult lives will take the next course open to them is to integrate themselves into this new life. Once Carmen has escaped from tradition and Manon has escaped from the outside world, they must make the adjustments necessary to totally commit themselves to their new lives. Marie-Louise, now deceased, is the only character who chose a dead-end and is now beyond the cares of the daily world. It is up to her daughters to either carry on or ignore the torch which has been thrown to them: the traditional ideals that they are meant to continue to uphold. Carmen's negation of these precepts is wholehearted, yet she soon finds that constructing a life without reminders of them is not simple. Manon, on the other hand, is at a stage in her life where she must quickly patch together some semblance of a secure existence based upon these precepts before she can no longer remember the details of the model set for her.

The swiftness with which these two girls make their decisions as to the direction of their future does not imply rashness. As previously discussed, these two sisters had

long dreamt of the chance to choose their own direction and image, and they were now being given the chance to actually do so. This chapter will follow their mental development as adults in the lives that they have chosen, referring back to their childhood to substantiate the actions that they take and to show the origins of their thoughts. Other Tremblay characters will be employed to further emphasize how these types of characters and situations recur in Tremblay's works. The two plays dealing with Carmen and Manon as adults, Damnée Manon, sacrée Sandra and Sainte Carmen de la Main, will be used to support my theories.

Though Carmen's initial escape has been affected, she is still far from being a settled, secure member of the society which she longed to join. She is an outcast from her former life and not accepted by the "respectable" classes of people in her city. The life that she has carved out for herself is centered around a group of people who themselves are outcasts from respectability and chained to a "demi-monde" where they can exist as their fantasies dictate. In this world of underground Montreal there are few taboos, and existence is, as previously mentioned, based primarily upon wit, intelligence, and luck. The lives of the social misfits that Tremblay has created are centred in a very special type of prison. The boundaries of it are not primarily physical, for these people are tied together by their need for each other in order to exist. That is, the "clique mentality" exists, which means that one member of the exclusive group

needs the love and acceptance of the other members of the group in order to have the security and confidence to continue on the path already chosen.

In a city like Montreal, which acknowledges the avant-garde community but does not yet accept it enough to let it show itself anywhere without chance of ridicule, Carmen must accustom herself to a new feeling of notoriety. The gay groups in Montreal have different levels of respectability, and Carmen's new friends who frequent the bars and clubs on the Main Street are the least powerful on the scale of "class." This group is the more sleazy, poorer element, made up of all type of people, many from small country villages in the Laurentians or the Eastern Townships. Many have fallen prey to the lure of easy money in the prostitution rings or are trying to prove to themselves that they have talent as performers by entertaining in the strip-tease clubs in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, their publicity never seems to reach far enough outside of the realm of the "demi-monde" to give them a step up into a respectable theatrical circle. Each group of outcasts is very protective of its image and of its members' former lives, for once a town, a family, or a name has been left behind it is regarded as a forsaken, non-public fact. The new images projected by the inmates of this "demi-monde" are often earmarked by a glossy exterior which serves as a veneer to hide the uncertainty and fear inside the people. Most of the members of this society must adjust to the fact that, though

they are no longer bound by the rules of a traditional or religious society, they must now conform to the regulations of this new world into which they have entered.

Carmen's position in this new society is still precarious for she depends on the love of her audience to keep her in work and to keep her ego intact. Though she has escaped from her old life, the controlling forces pushing her in this new world are no less demanding and no less limiting. Carmen soon finds out, in Sainte Carmen de la Main, that one cannot contradict the status quo in this new society nor can one stir up violent feelings against the powers that operate within the society without suffering punishment for it. Perhaps it is here that the memories of her past life affect Carmen the most for, even as she decides to radically change her style of singing and transform herself into the "Voice of the Main," the notion that she may be attacked both physically and verbally is very much in her mind. The martyr image, which is constantly projected in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, and is associated with Manon and Marie-Louise primarily, is now applicable also to Carmen, who is willing to suffer in order to accomplish the goal that will finally give her fulfillment and make her feel that she has achieved some degree of self-respect and individuality.

Carmen's role, in Tremblay's writings, develops from a character who is an ordinary human being to one who is a symbol representing an entire class of women in Québec. His treatment of her decisions and subsequent death in Sainte

Carmen de la Main do, indeed, set her up as a martyred saint. While it is Manon who is striving to be the saint, she is only superficial in her ritualistic habits, and these are themselves only oriented towards saving herself. It is Carmen who raises herself above the petty life that she was meant to live on earth and gives of herself to free others from their prisons.

Carmen is a lone spirit, cut off by choice from all supportive forces around her, for she considers them too binding to be constructive. Adrift in a maelstrom that has no precedent in her mind or heritage, Carmen is forced to fend for herself or be swept aside by others more powerful than her. The price that Carmen has paid for her freedom from tradition-ridden roles and religious fanaticism is dear, for she must now forge a new lifestyle out of the many new experiences presented to her. Losers in this new game that Carmen is playing are relegated to the bottom of the "social ladder," and, in order to climb to the top rung, Carmen must keep her wits about her. The position at the top of this "social ladder" is held by a leader who commands the respect of all around him until he oversteps his bounds and until his powers are pushed beyond the point of their force and dissipate. Carmen must learn how to live in this world quickly, for it is a world that will not make allowances for newcomers. Carmen has started to do this at the end of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, but, in Sainte Carmen de la Main, we see how difficult it has become for her to reconcile her

desires for fame and personal success with her need to express her own feelings and satisfy her own integrity.

The background with which her family has left her makes it impossible for Carmen to totally integrate herself with people in this "demi-monde" that has become her new home. She is unable to completely forsake her concepts of what is moral and what is immoral, as stated previously. Rather than letting those around her sink further into self-indulgence and self-deception, Carmen eventually tries to raise them above their current station in life. Instead of following the pattern set out for her by other successful members of the community, Carmen again rebels against the status quo. Instead of stepping on those unable to fend for themselves, she tries to take care of them and point out the path that she feels will lead them to a better way of life and some self-esteem.

Because of her early conditioning Carmen is able to rise above the lifestyle around her and keep herself from completely adopting their manner of existence. Though she does actually become a part of this world of sullied ideals and compromised goals, her own basic make-up is such that it never changes. Even when Carmen is chastizing her sister and exhorting her to change her life into a more fruitful one, Carmen is remembering their common background. Though Carmen is self-oriented, she never forgets the others around her, using her own experiences as an example to stir them into movement away from their stagnant modes of life. After

spending her formative years with Marie-Louise, who was, as previously discussed, determined to bring her daughters up as models of purity and assets to the conventional community, how can Carmen help but have some degree of this concept left in her? She is the constructive product of her mother's teachings, for she acts using them as foundation. Manon is the negative result of the same teachings for she chooses to embrace the mysticism and superficial elements of her mother's religion rather than interpreting them and applying them to her own life. Carmen has struck out on her own and tried to break away from the confining elements of her mother's conditioning while not forgetting the purpose of her teachings. Manon has, instead, steeped herself in the memory of these lessons. She had dedicated her life to enshrining the rites associated with the teachings.

Manon is still shrouded by the memories that the past has carved into the woodwork of her home, unable to make the break with habit in the same zealous manner as that of Carmen. The first word that she utters in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, "still," is as emblematic of her life as Carmen's first word, "wow!" Manon is still living out the life of her past in a twisted and fanatic way. She is trying so hard to bring back the secure life of childhood that she is ignoring her needs as a mature woman and an individual person. Manon has tried to merge her life with that of her mother, and the resulting composite figure has become a recluse given to religious meditation and an almost mad craving for martyrdom.

Manon regards the outside world as a threat instead of a challenge. There is no sense of outward motion in her life for she is a woman given to introspection. Manon's adult life is a series of circles, each one smaller than the next, which all stem from her "inner core." The "inner core" refuses to turn out to the world. Manon is so afraid of external influences that her entire being is trapped by the cocoon which she has woven around herself made up of threads of events from her past. The ritual of her mother's life appeals to her, for its order and lack of personal choice or involvement are the perfect solution for her fear of individual existence. The need to be loved and protected is still a huge part of Manon's adult personality, for she has never allowed herself to realize that, though her parents were torn from her abruptly, their influence would have had to be terminated eventually, though perhaps in a less shocking manner.

While Carmen's "inner core" is oriented in an outward direction, towards showing others her true worth and helping them to achieve their own goals, Manon's "inner core" is self-oriented, for she relates events around her to her own existence only. This "inner core" is the force that inspires Tremblay's characters to act, to dream, and to rebel. It is more than an emotional or psychological drive. It is the sum of their present and past lives, which combine to cause what seem to be impulsive or spontaneous actions. No character in Tremblay can totally cut himself off from the

influences of his background, and these values, when not actively being used, are stored deep within the character. The "inner core" is more than a subconscious, for it contains some very conscious thoughts and feelings, of which the character is well aware. These are coupled with the thoughts and feelings which the character has inherited through the teachings of his parents and have created a force that can control both conscious and unconscious actions. Tremblay's characters have much trouble in mastering this "inner core" for in weak characters such as Manon it takes over their lives completely leaving no room for outside influences. In the stronger characters it drives them so hard that they often find themselves without control over their actions, feeling that they must accomplish some goal without really understanding what it is that is forcing them to continue when obstacles block their path. Carmen is one of these strong characters, who will not be thwarted in her bid for individuality, yet cannot completely give up her deeply rooted ties with the past.

The thrust of Manon's life as an adult is towards achieving some sort of peace of mind within herself. This state of existence is virtually impossible when she does not allow herself the freedom to explore new avenues of thought or accept logical reasons for her unhappiness. Manon rejects her sister's concern, preferring to suffer in her own world of memories and thoughts. She sees Carmen's concern as interference and feels that, because Carmen's lifestyle is

objectionable to her, she must ignore her suggestions as also being useless. Manon's closed mind does not permit any flexibility, and she finds security in this type of stability. Though Manon's life is indeed stationary, and there is no threat of change imminent, the security which she craves is only present in a superficial way. There is no real promise of comfort or fulfillment in this way of life for Manon is in no way in touch with reality or the outside world. Though she sees herself as existing on a higher plane of existence, beyond the dirtiness of the everyday world, there is no denying her actual physical presence in it. Carmen has come to terms with the life outside the family world and has created her own temporary solution to the problems which life poses. Manon has chosen instead to retreat from the world outside and to recreate the situation in which she grew up. She does this by preserving the memories of people, their actions, and her own childhood reaction to them. Manon has precluded all chance of growth by taking away the stimuli that initiate it.

Life to Carmen is an exciting stream of events leading to one climatic moment that will fulfill the goal of the individual. Life to Manon is as it always has been--never shifting, never moving. Manon sees her life as "A long grey ribbon behind me All the same" ¹ Her life has become a series of mourning rituals for the dead. The image of the chaste garb of a cloistered nun aptly captures the essence of Manon's outward appearance, for she seems to

the naked eye to be both untouched and a shell for some other force that is operating through her.

The echoes of Marie-Louise that are heard through her children reverberate throughout the entire play, creating the image of a force that travels through each character at a given moment, shaping their lives and destroying their impossible dreams. When Manon answers her sister's accusation that her life is a prison, she states, "Life is no better outside, Carmen."² The image of life as a prison cell is alluded to by Marie-Louise when she is speaking of the family that she has raised for twenty years, just before Léopold issues his fatal challenge to her at the close of the play: "You want to come for a ride in the car with me, tonight, Marie-Lou?"³ Tremblay is consciously drawing parallels between his characters in this situation, as he does often, having them speak similar lines and echo each other's sentiments in situations that are vaguely reminiscent of each other yet are not completely repetitive.

An important example of this echoing technique is Carmen telling Manon to finish her thoughts aloud, as she hates her sister's habit of leaving a sentence unfinished. At the same time in the action of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, Marie-Louise is being goaded by Léopold, who is taunting her about her lack of interest in sexual relations. She asks him to finish his thought aloud when he will not complete his statement about her mental problems and their manifestations. This type of double-lines running through a scene is one of

Tremblay's ways of injecting a form of music into his plays.

As previously mentioned, Tremblay often uses musical choral forms, repeating thematic strains that occur in different settings and are articulated in a similar yet not exact replica of each other.⁴ Tremblay uses the repeating thematic melody, or statement to show his audiences that the characters he is portraying, though they may seem totally different and have little in common as individuals, share the same sickness, or desire the same panacea. His characters resemble a tightly knit musical ensemble, where each person is tied to the next by the threads of their music.

The combinations of characters from Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, in particular, are like the intricate weaving in a complicated piece of music. One note, or one character closely follows the former, complementing, harmonizing, attacking and contrasting to it, each note being equal in importance. Some "notes" appear to have more value than the other, some seem to be shorter or less powerful, but essentially, they are worth the same value, for the piece of music would be seriously lacking without that particular note to complete the progression or the melody. Carmen without Manon to offset her would not be as strong a character as she is, for it is Manon who asks all the questions to drive Carmen towards a more concrete expounding of her philosophy of life and death. Manon, on the other hand, needs the goading of Carmen to point out her foibles and to try to show her how shallow her religious leanings

really are.

Tremblay's characters expose each other's "inner core" to the audiences, breaking down their veneer and delving deeply into the heart of these troubled beings. The metaphorical hell in which these characters find themselves is much like the very real hell portrayed in Jean Paul Sartre's play No Exit, where the characters serve as their own torturers, each being the nemesis of the other. Tremblay's characters are not as harsh as Sartre's, choosing instead to help and to torture at the same time. Though Marie-Louise is cutting away at her husband Léopold, she is still trying to form him into something and not completely annihilate him. It is a similar case when Léopold begins to chide his wife. These people still feel that their only hope is to mold their partner into the person that they originally hoped they had married. It is only when all hope is gone, when it is replaced with complete despair, that the only possible outcome is to end their all-consuming relationship, and, subsequently, their lives.

Continuing with the analogy of a musical form, one may classify the women in Forever Yours, Marie-Lou as providing the "musical theme" for the play. They are each trapped in their own prison and use different methods to break out. Each of the women has a different problem, but all are linked in their misery. Léopold is not the "villain" of this play; he is the base line in the musical analogy, or the sound that determines the pace and rhythm

of the piece, binding it together. Léopold is the boundary that defines the limits of the duties of his women. He is the foundation and is used to delineating the extent of their privileges and the rate of their development. The outcry of each woman, either alone or at the same time, creates the tension in this play and can be seen as corresponding to the thematic development in a piece of music.

That both Manon and Léopold leave their thoughts hanging, as in an unfinished musical phrase, and keep their conclusions to themselves, is symptomatic of their particular problems. Both of them are dreamers who have grandiose ideas of how they will make their lives complete without the help of the rest of the existing world. Both Léopold and Manon are the type of character who is prone to ignore hard facts preferring instead to romanticize these facts and formulate them into an elaborate story that is the basis of future actions. Léopold never made a success of himself financially, for he never actually had the nerve to ask his boss for a deserved raise. Manon never achieves her goal of being loved and accepted, for she never has the nerve to ask for love and acceptance. These two characters hide their heads under the wing of their protectors, and when their protectors are removed, they go on hiding in a dream version of their previous situation. Manon does not need other people to feed her fantasies, for having imagined them as she would like to see them, they are so. She can leave her thoughts hanging, for it does not matter to her if actual live people hear them. Her companions are

all dead, figments of her fertile imagination, and their opinions are those that she has invented.

Tremblay makes his characters rely on themselves and on their "inner cores" to such a degree that they start to internalize everything, even conversations that should be held with a second person present. Manon is so accustomed to living with her spectres that she does not feel the need to completely express each thought, the ritual of her thinking being so familiar to her that she need only start a thought process to know what the final result or conclusion will be. Tremblay's characters are often divided inside of themselves into several complex characters as stated before, who battle internally and support each other, ending the need for all other people. The feelings of inadequacy that swamp each character during the course of his or her lonely life forces the character into a fantasy state that for a time alleviates the pain of failure.

As children, Carmen and Manon reacted differently to the fights of their parents. As has previously been noted, Carmen distrusted her mother's reports on their father's brutality, and Manon feared her father and revered her mother. Much of Manon's unbalanced adult emotions were formed in her childhood and came about because of the discrepancies she too found in her mother's stories. Manon's reaction to the vague doubts that are planted in her mind by Carmen about her mother's honesty in telling her daughters about their father is not the same as

Carmen's. Manon makes her disillusionment visible by running away and hiding under the covers of her bed, an evasive action that will recur in various adaptations throughout her life. This defence mechanism will continue to develop until she has perfected a way of hiding from facts that displease or frighten her. In her adult life, Manon has finally developed this technique to such a degree that she is able to manufacture her own versions of past events and make them real in her mind in order to block out any disturbing facts that might pervade her dream-world.

In Carmen's adult life her distrust of people has turned into a toughness that allows her to survive in the "demi-monde." This world is full of people who would attempt to fool her into believing things so that they might profit from her naiveté. Manon's unquestioning trust of some of those in power over her as a child has been magnified into a devotion that will not allow her to change her opinion of any of these people. The doubts in her mind as to the validity of her belief in the people she adores has been erased by her fantasy world's eradication of all bad or deceptive sides of them. The feelings that guided these two girls as children, have now shaped their adult lives and determined the direction which they will take through life.

The state of mind that now rules Carmen's actions is more realistic than that of Manon. Carmen is actively living out her fantasy life, while Manon is forced to make her dreams into a mental exercise.

Carmen: I don't want you to copy me.
 I just want you to get out of
 here....and stop dreaming.
 Manon: Dreaming? You're the one
 who's dreaming, Carmen. You
 live in a dream.
 Carmen: Well, if what you're doing
 is real....I prefer my dream.⁵

The argument here is a difficult one, for who indeed is in the right? In the eyes of Carmen, the life she is living is real, for it is active and she is achieving some of the success and acceptance she so desperately longed for as a child. She sees her sister stagnating with only phony dreams for fulfillment. Manon, on the other hand, sees the "demi-monde" as phony and cheap in its fulfillment of her sister's dreams, and considers these achieved goals as falsifications of the ideal, and therefore worthless. At this stage in the action between Carmen and Manon, there is a balance set up for neither sister is anywhere near the level of achievement that she is trying to prove she has attained. Both Carmen and Manon are victims of the dreams which they have constructed. The individual perception of each character terms the life of the other as invalid. The objective view of this situation is that neither sister has the right to condemn the other, for their lifestyles suit the way in which they have chosen to develop. Manon, at this stage in her development as a mature woman, could no sooner live the life which Carmen lives, than could Carmen forsake her cowboy outfit for the sombre attire of a religious recluse.

Carmen realizes that her new life is not ideal, and that the group supporting her is not made up of the types of people that she used to dream would idolize her. She is not able however, to forsake these people for the more respectable but less exciting life led by members of the conventional type of society. Her explanations to her sister of what her life really entails are almost a way of rationalizing to herself. Manon's approval would have been the final release that Carmen needed to live a totally free and unencumbered life outside of the family unit. Manon's refusal to sanctify her sister's style of existence is her refusal to accept any type of world outside of her own small circle.

Manon claims to be a deeper thinker than Carmen, with more capacity for feeling, but Carmen counters this attack upon herself by challenging Manon, "It's not a question of feelings. It's your life. What the hell are you going to do with it?"⁶ Carmen certainly does feel as strongly as Manon, especially about something as vital as her lifestyle. Manon seems to equate misery and suffering with feeling deeply, and sees her sister as shallow and callous. As with many shy sensitive people who are not used to dealing with the outside world, people who are able to cope with large crowds and daily problems seem unfeeling and distant. Manon has refused to recognize herself as a part of any society, which she cannot avoid by virtue of her presence

on earth. She may not be an active member of a society, or a particularly important one in the eyes of the world at large, but her existence is still a part of the machine around her, as explained in the above section dealing with the importance of each individual musical note in a musical score. Manon's life is a vital and necessary part of the schematized universe around her.

Carmen does not realize that Manon's chosen path is as unique as her own. She does not recognize that it will serve a purpose on earth much as her own will lead her to her destiny. Tremblay's characters never fit into a mold, nor do they do what is asked of them by convention. Carmen with the lack of insight and patience that links her to her father Léopold, cannot understand that Manon is a separate person, and that they must each live their lives according to the dictates of their "inner core."

Manon's dreams are rooted in the past and stem from her interpretations of real occurrences, while Carmen's dreams are ideas that will change the already present thoughts in her mind. Manon's life is one of replays and regurgitations, while Carmen's is a life of exploration. Marie-Louise dreamt of perfection as seen on television, in her life, complete with the requisite happy ending. In her shadowing of her mother's life, Manon too watches television. Carmen who spies her mother's photograph on the television set accuses her sister, "I bet you look at that more than the programmes."⁷ Manon's life is one of reruns that recycle endlessly, growing more vivid and more large with every repeat. She now believes

that her mother actually is a saint, to the chagrin of Carmen, who vocalizes Manon's fantasy with a touch of reproach, "Mama was not a martyr, and Papa was not the devil."⁸ Carmen comes to understand that her sister is bent on making the rest of her life into a hell on earth using her father as a scapegoat upon whom she can place the guilt for the unhappiness around her.

The concept of a scapegoat is another theme that runs through Tremblay's works. As has been mentioned before, few of Tremblay's characters have a thorough enough understanding of themselves or of their lives to comprehend the facts that they are their own torturers, and that they themselves are the prison keepers who do not permit total freedom or escape from the past. Most of these characters feel obliged to find some other force or person upon whom to place the blame for their lot in life, their dilemmas, or their pains. An example of this outside of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, is found in the life of Hélène of En pièces détachées, a woman who blames her unhappy marriage first on her mother Robertine, for allowing it, and then on her husband Henri for failing her. Similarly, in Hosanna, we see Hosanna blame all his "friends" for the way he feels because of their prank on him one evening at the nightclub he frequents in Montreal. Hosanna points at their jealousy as the initiating factor of the joke, and then at their maliciousness, avoiding the real reason; that is, that he

was becoming too power hungry and too "bitchy" to deal with and had to be taken down several rungs on the social ladder of his community in order to be allowed to stay within the framework of the group.

This "scapegoat mentality" arises when Tremblay's characters are not yet strong enough to face their own problems and must make excuses for the way in which their lives are going. Throughout Tremblay's plays, it is always made quite clear that there is rarely anyone outside of the character to blame for their problems. The different forces operating within each character are often in opposition, as already explained, and only occasionally do these forces come to terms with each other. The usual pattern of events is for the characters to be faced with some crises in their lives and suddenly realize that it is the negative and positive forces within their own psyches that are complicating their affairs. That is not to say that the forces are then magically entwined and life becomes easy for the characters. On the contrary, this realization of forces at war within him or herself usually bring the particular character to a stage in his or her life that is more difficult to deal with than the previous state of relative innocence. Characters like Hosanna are capable of dealing with this type of barrier thrown in their faces, having long come to expect that kind of obstacle in the life that they have chosen to lead. It is the characters such as Manon, who are ill-equipped to handle a crisis that upsets their entire staid and staunch vision of who they are and why they have been put on earth.

It is the Manon-like characters in Tremblay's plays who never escape the "scapegoat mentality" to go further into the exploration of their minds.

Manon is so caught up in the problems of the ten years past that she has left herself no time for the problems of today. Carmen has learned to rationalize her position and her past, and can block events out of her daily mind, relegating the still unsolved problems to a corner of her mind and allowing them to surface only when she chooses to let them do so. Her visits to her sister, or her speeches about her family to her cohorts at the Club Rodéo are painful reminders of the past. She does not, however, give up this mental whipping of herself, as if she felt that total freedom from these past events would destroy her, or leave her with no heritage, no foundation or subconscious from which to develop, escape, and ultimately climb.

Carmen's anger is directed at Manon, and though her speeches make sense, they are not completely rational. Carmen knows that her sister needs some type of professional help, and that no amount of chiding from her will force Manon to give up her life of martyrdom. It is ironic that in conventional terms, Carmen, with her lesbian tendencies and not the pious Manon would be regarded as sick and in need of professional help. Nevertheless, Carmen continues her tirades, as if to satisfy herself that she has done her utmost to save her sister and rid herself of any guilt feeling that thoughts of neglect might nurture. During

these sessions of pain and soul-searching, Carmen tries to stress to Manon that she is not a cold calculating woman and that she really does have deep feelings:

Of course I remember, Manon. I remember very well. We were born in the same shit. It's painful for me, too. But at least I try to get out of it. At least I try!"

As a child, Carmen cannot communicate the love for life and the world with which she is filled. The exploration of all of life's facets would be regarded in her family as a startling idea, and the result of the influence of the sullied outside world of modern living. Carmen's covert sensuality would be equated with evil and would be distasteful to the members of her family. The pain of having to hide such strong desires and longings makes Carmen into a resentful young woman who is often like a caged animal pounding on the bars of her cage, but not certain of exactly what lies beyond the bars. Carmen does not let the anticipation of the unknown develop into a fear, for she is so disenchanted with the conventional family life around her that any alternative seems viable to her. Carmen is wound up so tightly that when she finally does make her exit from family life it is with such a surprise goal that her remaining relatives, predominantly Manon, reverberate from the shock long afterwards. It is amazing that for fifteen years Carmen could carry a dream inside of her and hide it totally from people with whom her life was intimately entwined.

Manon's inability to communicate is in part the

result of her being surrounded by people who intimidated her as a child and dominated her. Manon regards her mother as a saint, yet could not confide in her. Manon remembers walking hand in hand with her mother, and having her mother continually forget that she was there. Manon recalls this as a part of the problem of reaching out for someone and being rejected. The young Manon saw her sister as a vixen, and did not understand her brash ways of interpreting the problems between their parents. The impressionable Manon was wholeheartedly in favour of whatever her mother suggested in the hope that it would bring them closer together and provide an outlet for the love and passion that Manon carried within herself, unwilling to admit its presence.

Fanatical religion and sexual deviations are shown by Tremblay to stem from this same basic need that each character has within himself: the need to belong to someone or be needed by them. Human beings, in Damnée Manon, sacrée Sandra, are shown to be neither all purity and goodness nor all evil and luridness. Religious and sexual obsessives are very close in that they fantasize with the same degree of intense concentration, and try to create situations that will release their inner desires, so long repressed by society and the mores developed by society's idea of normality.

Each of the family members was so involved in

their own problems and their own vision of how the family life should be, that they ignored the viewpoint of the others around them without even realizing it. Whenever one of the family members did decide to air a view, it came out magnified, and was judged in the same overly intense way by those hearing it, for it usually attacked their own ways of thinking.

Léopold's inability to relate to other people was a source of pain to him and he blamed his family for both his poverty and his loss of popularity at the tavern which he used to frequent. He escaped from the dilemma of finding a guilty party to blame his loneliness on through drinking. This escape route gave his vision a rosy tint and allowed him the self-indulgent feeling of having power over his family. Léopold was so intent on keeping up his appearance of power that he became what amounts to a tyrant, ranting and raving at the slightest hint of criticism from his family. He had lost his power within his circle of working friends, and in order to recapture his lost masculine power and pride, he felt it necessary to berate any other people left around him. The fact that these people were weaker than he was and unable to fight him on his own territory, that is physically, gave Léopold an added incentive. He used their weaknesses to form them into a captive audience for his bravado and false accusations. This restoration of his assertive powers did not make Léopold any happier. On the

contrary, it further alienated him from the people around him and did away with any chance for communication within his family circle. Family life became a vehicle instead of a resting place, for it served as a boost to his powers instead of a home where he could relax and come to grips with his life and mind. When this vehicle was destroyed by Marie-Louise's refusal to accept his abuse any longer, Léopold was forced to give up in his attempt to make life more bearable. The only avenue left open to this frustrated man was to admit defeat and live on as a broken person with no self-respect, or end his life in the one gesture in his life that took courage. Marie-Louise's refusal to accept his abuse any longer, forced Léopold to give up in his attempt to make his life more bearable. This gesture, although it was an act of final desperation, may be seen in a faintly positive light as being an action that bridged the chasm denying communication between husband and wife.

Léopold's reference to the picture of his wife is a suggestion that perhaps all was not always the way it is now, filled with frustrated physical longings and frustrated emotions bottled up inside of people who are unable to bridge the gap between each other. The endearment on the picture, "Forever Yours, Marie-Lou," leads Marie-Louise to start in on another verbal tirade against her husband filled with more exaggerations. Tremblay is sure to intersperse the truth within the tirades, for in the same breath as Marie-Louise is accusing her husband of being a child-beater, she

also states:

You're just a guy who's screwed up his life, and who's taking it out on his family instead of himself.

This is a statement that is both rational and completely true. Tremblay allows his characters moments of lucidity and objective observation that gives them the power to find the key to another's problems while they are still trapped within the misery of their own lives. The tragedy of this is that though characters can explain the problem of each other to each other, the character in question is never able to accept these facts as the truth and therefore will not react upon them. The inability to communicate enters into this situation, for there are so many untrue statements being made, that when a true statement is actually brought forth, it is ignored as part of the superficial conversation.

As an adult, Carmen refuses to evade communication. By soothing feelings of frustration and sublimating them with lies and half truths, the young girl Carmen saw her parents trying to lull themselves into some state of inertia where their situation would not hurt them as deeply. Carmen now as an adult sees the hurt as a necessary part of life, for it should spur people on to try to correct their problems and thereby ameliorate their situations. Instead of fantasizing and placing the guilt on someone else in difficult situations, Carmen has developed into a woman who will confront her problems bravely. The spark for change was effectively quashed each time it reared its head in her

family life, for the fear of change was too great for either parent to overcome.

When Carmen escaped from this fear-filled environment, she began to see how one must take the blame upon one's own shoulders for any actions in which one takes part. There is no sense in blaming anyone else, for that is merely a ruse and a tactic to escape reality. Carmen has striven to become self-sufficient, and in such a life there is no place for blaming others for your own state of affairs. Responsibility is placed on the individual for his own actions, and the satisfaction found in coping with problems instead of running away from them is manifold. Carmen has ceased to be a cog in any type of machine, family or otherwise. We can acknowledge that Carmen is still a prisoner in the world, but in her new captive situation, she is at least allowed the privilege of individual thought and decision-making, whatever the results may be. In this new machine, Carmen is not completely powerless, for though it is large and powerful, one rebellious action has the potential to disrupt movement in it.

As Carmen is telling Manon of her escape into this larger machine where she has some power, Léopold, in the action of the play, is describing his job at his machine, and his fear of life:

We're like gears in a great big machine....
And we're afraid to stop it because we think
we're too small....But if a gear gets busted,
the machine could break down....Who knows.¹¹

Carmen is trying to find out what actually happens when that

"gear" breaks, what there is after the revolution takes place and the individual is left alone with only his dreams to lead him forwards to a strange and foreign place. Marie-Louise and Léopold are avoiding the inevitable break of the "gear" that runs their family machine, while Manon, as a child, is regarding this machine with awe and fear. As an adult, she is still pretending that the broken machine is whole and functional. Manon, as an adult, can be seen as a forlorn child fondling the remains of a shattered but favourite toy that she still refuses to replace with another. Manon is trapped by the machine guiding her, while Carmen is challenged by it to fight for her rights as an individual. Léopold and Marie-Louise never thought to fight their machine, for they were from a generation that was brought up to obey the powers that govern. Carmen and Manon are from a new generation that was brought up in a world that questioned the status quo and later tried to improve upon it by peaceful means if possible, and by violent means if necessary. Manon has disassociated herself from this generation but Carmen is not afraid of the future, the present or the past. They are her battle ground and provide her with the tools of rebellion. She is not intimidated by the size or influence of the machines around her, be they religion, tradition, familial structure, society, or sexual mores. She has enough confidence in her own mind to be able to attempt to mold her own life as her own destiny from ideas and dreams that she has developed on her own.

Carmen's escape from home was also an attempt to find a new world where it was not a sin to reach out and touch someone on impulse. Home was a lost cause, as Carmen explains:

It would never have changed. What can you expect when people scream bloody murder every time you want to touch them.¹²

This does not only refer to her mother's problem with physical closeness, for there was also no physical or emotional touching in her family by other members. It was an unspoken rule that one should not attempt to delve into the mind or life of another member of the family. There was a respectable distance to be held between family members, lest some ugliness be revealed and create more problems in the already troubled group.

Marie-Louise describes her uncommunicative family unit perfectly, expressing the sterility and animosity from which Carmen has endeavored to escape:

...everyone's fighting like cats and dogs. The whole bunch of us, alone, in prison, together.¹³

This is nowhere near the image that Marie-Louise had as a young girl, idealistically looking forward to a wonderful married life. Though Carmen sees this unit as a prison, Manon refuses to accept it as such, giving Carmen good reason to state, "The deeper you sink into your rotten past, the happier you are..."¹⁴ While this may not be entirely true and coloured by Carmen's disgust for the way in which her sister is living out her life, like a jail term to be

endured, there is an element of truth in her accusation.

Tremblay portrays Carmen in this second play about her, as a woman who

...decides not to disguise herself anymore and to try and find her own style of singing. She does it once and the people from the Main shoot her because she's dangerous. She was becoming Pauline Julien. She says in the play instead of talking about Colorado and Tennessee, I want to talk to the Main about the Main.¹⁵

The role of liberator and leader is not yet acceptable and Quebec is not yet able to deal with a Messiah or a Prophetess. In the pre-Levesque days of Québec when Separation was still a pipe-dream in the minds of the rabble-rousers, it was an insult to speak disparagingly of the situation of the Québécois. Carmen's position as inciter may be regarded as being ripe before its time. Though she has finally escaped from the shackles of the past into a state of mind calling for a reworking of the present to create a liveable future, her patrons are still stuck in the mire of tradition. They are not yet at the state where they can forsake the "demi-monde" of illusion and gamble on how reality will affect them. Carmen is destroyed as a threat to their peace of mind. Tremblay has stated,

She is my first character to have had an awareness of others. Mosanna did his trip for himself but Carmen did so for the sake of other people and for that society assassinated her, preventing the artist in her from speaking out.¹⁶

If Carmen is allowed to continue to develop, she will disturb the state of events the way they are now, and upset the

comfortable self-pitying, self-demeaning life style of her fellow workers. She is permitted to live only in the minds of those who would mourn her, a monument to their unfulfilled dreams and an inspiration to their hopes.

Tremblay's vision of Carmen is not a rosy one, but it is clear that he is proud of her. The choices that she makes do not always lead in the right direction, but the very fact that she is trying to become free is a point in her favour. As Tremblay has stated, "I write about two kinds of people, those who stay at home and die, and those who go out and live."¹⁷ Carmen's death in Sainte Carmen de la Main is a result of those around her who refuse to go out and live, and cannot tolerate or condone her attempt at living freely and being her own master. Carmen is a martyr to the cause of individuality, crushed by a society that is afraid to affirm its own existence in the modern world. Even in death, Carmen is a more vital and effective force than her sister Manon, who is still chained to the memories of her childhood life and serves no constructive purpose for anyone.

When Carmen finally walks out on Manon at the close of the action of Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, and tells her that she is leaving, never to return, it is obvious that she will carry the picture of Manon with her until her dying day. There is no way in which Carmen will be able to cut the final thread between Manon and herself. If she were able to do this, it would be tantamount to a denial of her entire heritage and history. Carmen must

keep a portion of her mind reserved for the memories of her past life and more importantly, the images that the past conjures and the history it represents. Forgetting Manon would negate Carmen, for it would mean the end of her ties with the people in the past who have helped to form her present. There is a difference between leaning on the past as a crutch and reliving past events as Manon persists in doing, and in using the events and thoughts of the past as examples and reference points in a new life as Carmen must do. Carmen will carry images of the past with her to her new life, and though she scoffs at them and regards the incidents of her childhood as damaging and wrong, they are her historical perspective and much of what she does or thinks as an adult stems from patterns ingrained inside of her from this early period of her life. Even if her new actions are in indirect opposition to this old way of life and thought, it is her act of rebellion against these ways that brings about change and allows her progression forward in life. Rebellion is not a force without a wall for it to break down, with no challenge for it to accept. Carmen is the match to ignite the change, but without Manon to break away from, nothing can keep her changing, and to keep her from slipping back into an old way, or a complacent attitude towards life.

Manon needs Carmen in a less definite way. The outside world that never touches Manon and is a source of fear and distaste to her is only brought to her attention

by the visits of her sister . Manon's dreams of the past would become totally self-indulgent if it were not for Carmen's challenges of their authenticity. That Manon will not change her life is not of prime importance. It is the fact that she is brought to the point of remembering painful events that occurred in the past when Carmen is present that is the most vital part of their clashes. Carmen shows Manon bits and pieces of how the events of their childhood looked to her as a child and how they seem to her now as an adult, and Manon is forced to accept a more clinical view of the world that she has constructed out of hopes and illusions regarding her parents' personalities.

Much as the vision of Marie-Louise and Léopold will never leave the mind of Manon, the vision of Manon, ten years later will never completely be pushed out of Carmen's mind. Manon represents her history, her background and as such will be a part of whatever decisions Carmen does choose to make. The subconscious mind rarely listens to the voice of reason when it tells of deaths and endings, and the idea of being able to erase painful memories is folly. Carmen's freedom will never include release from the influences of a past that chained her to other people and gave her the desire to escape from rigidity. Her happiness will be fleeting, for as long as she lives, the memory of her childhood and the concepts forced upon her will still reside in the recesses of her

memory. Manon, the shadow of the past, will always be a part of her consciousness, for they are intertwined by both blood and background, and can not be cut apart any easier than the horizon can be detached from the skyline. Carmen's thinking that she can escape her past by running away from it is as futile as Manon's childhood attempt at hiding under the covers of her bed when frightened. The scars left on these two women by the events of their childhood will remain for all of their lives, for ghosts do not age, nor do they fade with time.

CHAPTER V

POSTSCRIPT

After the November 15th, 1976 Parti Québécois victory in the Québec provincial election, the defeatist attitude of many Québécois is beginning to fade. The Québécois people can now look to their own governments for guidance and leadership, which they hope will take them on towards separation and autonomy. Tremblay is fully behind this Separatist government, as stated before, and has confidence in their leader, René Lévesque, a fiery politician whose air of honesty and ambition have charmed many Québécois into total acceptance of his policies. Though the emulation of American and English Canadian counterparts is still very much in evidence in Québec, new heroes are being created every day, and strides are being taken forward in the province's attitude towards self-reliance and self-respect.

With the need for heroes from another world or another culture fading, the Québécois people can start to build on their own figures, and those who are more Québécois than Parisian or American are certain to take over the limelight. Carmen, as a western singer, would no longer have a prestigious place in the annals of Québec music had she lived in the Québec of today, for now it is the performers who sing

of the glory of their own province and the beauty of its heritage who are being revered. The songs of Robert Charlebois, composed over the last ten years, glorify the province or good-naturedly mock the anti-Québécois sentiment of the years gone by. He sings,

I'm a frog
 You're a frog,
 Kiss me.
 I will turn into a prince, suddenly...¹

The people who were caught in the stereotype of the dumb Québécois, acting like a monkey in a cage, jumping for praise from the wealthy English Canadians and Americans who came to study this animal, are now standing up and protesting the patronizing attitude of their neighbours. The Québécois are rebelling against the image of the jolly lumberjack singing "Alouette" and eating heartily, while his fourteen children play at his feet and his wife busily does the laundry. Tremblay's images are pictures of the seeds of this now burgeoning revolution, for he could fortell that one day his people would actually attempt to achieve their goals. His women are on the brink of self-discovery, often finding themselves, yet not fully aware of the possibilities open to them once they have taken command of their own minds and bodies. His men provide the necessary contrast to these women, in such characters as Claude in En pièces détachées.

Of all the members of Hélène's family, Claude, who has been in a mental asylum for the last fifteen years, is the most realistic in terms of his own particular mode of escape from the confines of his society in Québec. Claude

is mad, and therefore his ravings are genuine and true representations of his emotions, with no thoughts of society's opinion to temper them. The other members of the family choose to evade the truth about themselves, opting instead for the cover of respectability and trying to conform in small ways to the rules of society. Claude has no such restrictions, and can be as honest in his accusations as he desires. Claude attacks his family for ignoring him and hiding him away from the world-at-large. Tremblay is creating a metaphor here for the type of Québécois who are content to hide away in their little corner of the world, pretending that the rest of the world does not exist, and that there are no problems to be dealt with. The ostrich-like ploy of sun-glasses that make him invisible is Claude's escape route from the people around him. Claude sees himself as merging in with the crowd and becoming invisible, or assimilated, when he speaks English and cannot be seen because of these magic glasses. While the women in his family, and brother-in-law Henri too, feel stymied by the forces that are trapping them into vacuums, Claude feels powerful. Perhaps his madness is more powerful because it refuses to be defeated. The main difficulty with tapping this power, is that Claude does not know how to channel it, and so it blindly spurts out in all directions, losing momentum and losing all usefulness as it dissipates.

Tremblay's Québec is full of such characters, who are unable to channel their goals into actions, so instead they let impulses die or ferment in their own minds, serving

no one and no purpose except to frustrate the thinker and create animosity. Claude is mad, militant and the prototype of Québec's new brand of revolutionary, crying "maitre chez nous" and "Québec sait faire".² He is the person who will cheer at the new slogan proposed for the 1978 automobile licence plates, "Je me souviens," or "I remember," referring back to the battle on the Plains of Abraham when the French were defeated by the English. This is the madness, the spirit that Tremblay would like to tap, and channel into productive pathways. Tremblay would like this power to light the fires of the revolution he sees as imminent. Claude is Tremblay's idea of the type of Québécois man who is ineffectual because of his self-indulgence and lack of identity. Claude sees the women of Québec, and those of his family in particular, as virginal, helpless creatures who are expected to appear dressed in white, and cannot understand that it is these very creatures who are the backbone of his home and province. Tremblay seems to point to such men as the indirect cause of the creation of the new breed of Québec woman, exemplified by Carmen.

Tremblay has now written eleven plays in eleven years, and has decided to change his own role in the history being made today in Québec. Tremblay's new attitude is to cease his cry to arms and place the onus on the newly elected provincial government to spur its populace on to work for independence and a sense of identity. This mode of thought may hinder Tremblay's work, or it may drive him on

to discover new areas of creative endeavor. He is now working on a novel entitled, The Fat Lady is Pregnant Again,³ dealing with the street where he grew up, as well as a cycle of songs for Québécois singer Pauline Julien.

With music by François Cousineau, these songs will portray a group of women, each of a different generation between 1890 and 1980. The songs already written deal once again with the problems of living within a society that is rigid and structured, and a government that needs to be challenged. The dreamers are still in evidence in Tremblay's work, as can be seen from the song about the nineteen fifties, La Rêve de la sauceuse dans le chocolat, in which a girl working on an assembly line fantasizes about battering herself, and finally ends up beating her boss.⁴

Because of his still present dissatisfaction with the state of mind of his people, Tremblay has not totally stopped writing material that is meant to point out their weaknesses and incite them towards change and positive action. Though the medium may shift and the style of writing alter, the words of Michel Tremblay will never lull an audience or reader into a state of complacency. His strength lies in his ability to probe and to interpret, and then to transmit his findings to others, a talent that no format can obscure. Whether or not his words and admonitions will continue to be heeded is a question that only time will be able to answer. Tremblay himself hopes that in time his province and his people will have changed to such an extent that "...my

plays will be viewed as they are viewed today. People

will say, "What's new we used to be."

Quibbles about the evidence is not unusual.

not rather a universal situation. Many nations have

found themselves in a similar position, striving for

autonomy and freedom from external governing forces.

Trinidad's specific portrayal of the tensions and a

situation is limited in the midst of Quibbles present only

one vision of a situation which has occurred throughout

the world. Though the characters are drawn with precision

and great attention to detail handling them as individuals.

the lives of Trinidad's characters may be seen as being

pertinent to people of many countries. The efforts of

Trinidad's plays are as far-reaching as his characters

are universal. Many types such as Native-Lovers and

Man and Rebel types such as Lovers will continue to

survive wherever and whenever situations of social

change occur.

plays will be viewed one day as period pieces. People will say, 'that's how we used to be.'"⁵

Québec's changing environment is not unique, but rather a universal situation. Many nations have found themselves in a similar position, striving for autonomy and freedom from external governing forces. Tremblay's specific portrayal of the tensions and activities localized in the milieu of Québec present only one vision of a situation which has occurred throughout the world. Though his characters are drawn with precision and great attention to detail branding them as Québécois, the lives of Tremblay's characters may be seen as being pertinent to people of many countries. The effects of Tremblay's plays are as far-reaching as his characters are universal. Martyr types such as Marie-Louise and Manon and Rebel types such as Carmen will continue to surface wherever and whenever situations of social turmoil occur.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

- ¹La Patrie is a Québécois newspaper.
- ²James Quig, "The Joul Revolution," Canadian Magazine, 14 May 1977, p. 19.
- ³Laurent Mailhot, "Les belles soeurs ou l'enfer des femmes," Le théâtre québécois, (Montréal: Editions HMH, 1970), p. 191.
- ⁴Claude Gingras, "Mon dieu, que je les aime ces gens-là," La Presse, 16 August 1969, p. 26. ('These people, I have them under my skin...We were three families in the same house: thirteen in seven rooms...')
- ⁵Fernand Dore, "Michel Tremblay, le gars a barbe sympathique," Le Magazine Macleans, June 1969, p. 12. (One or two left, the others were handicapped for life, and certain ones are today in prison or mental hospitals.')
- ⁶Dennis Kucherawy, Performing Arts in Canada, Spring 1977, p. 45.
- ⁷*Ibid.*, p. 45.
- ⁸Gail Scott, "Revolutionary Spirits," Macleans Magazine, May 1977, p. 47.
- ⁹Other playwrights such as Jean Barbeau have made use of Joul when writing.
- ¹⁰Gail Scott, "Revolutionary Spirits," p. 49.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 48.
- ¹²Jack Kapica, "Has Michel Tremblay, victorious at last, put the lid on the volcano?" The Montreal Star, March 1977, p. 46.

¹³James Quig, "The Joual Revolution," p. 16.

¹⁴Both Sainte Carmen de la Main and Les héros de mon enfance were given unfavourable reviews by the critics, both English and French, and had very short runs, cf. Appendix.

CHAPTER II

¹A complete list of these plays is found in the Appendix.

²The latter action occurs at the climax of Sainte Carmen de la Main.

³Michel Tremblay, Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, trans. J. Van Burek and B. Glassco (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1975), p. 37 (hereafter referred to as Marie-Lou).

⁴Michel Belair, Michel Tremblay (Québec City: Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1972), p. 79. ('Marie-Lou does not know that she is speaking of an entire nation, she thinks that she is speaking of her sister-in-law. She does not understand that it is the same thing happening....not to play the speeches as messages, for the characters do not know that they are speaking messages.')

CHAPTER III

- ¹Gerald L. Gold and Marc-Adéland Tremblay, Communities and Culture in French Canada (Montreal: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1973), p. 111.
- ²Ibid., p. 113.
- ³Ibid., p. 116.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 118.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 119.
- ⁶Tremblay, Marie-Lou, p. 9f.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 11.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 16.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 17.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 26.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 77.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 78f.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 80.
- ¹⁴Ibid., p. 78.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 42.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 35.
- ¹⁷Ibid.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 40.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 45.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 48.

²¹Ibid., p. 55.

²²Ibid., p. 67.

²³Ibid., p. 84.

²⁴Ibid., p. 23.

²⁵Michel Tremblay, Damnée Manon, sacrée Sandra (Ottawa: Les Editions Leméac, 1977), p. 49 (hereafter referred to as Damnée Manon).

²⁶Tremblay, Marie-Lou, p. 77.

²⁷Dennis Kucherawy, Performing Arts in Canada, Spring 1977, p. 45.

²⁸Robert Bourassa, as Premier of Québec was recognized by many as an incompetent. A large part of the Québécois community regarded him as a traitor who had sided with the rich English of the province. Bourassa's personal wealth and unfulfilled promises earned him the reputation of not caring about his people. Bourassa was nicknamed Pinocchio, after the story book character whose nose grew every time he lied. Bourassa was also seen by many Québécois as a puppet of the Liberal party and not as a leader.

²⁹Tremblay, Damnée Manon, p. 53.

³⁰Tremblay, Marie-Lou, p. 29.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 30.

³³Ibid., p. 60.

³⁴Ibid., p. 32.

CHAPTER IV

- ¹Tremblay, Marie-Lou, p. 14.
- ²Ibid., p. 15.
- ³Ibid., p. 86.
- ⁴The most obvious use of the choral form can be seen in Les Belles soeurs, harmonic configurations can be examined in Bonjour, là, bonjour, where groups of people speak in a complementary fashion, one played off against the other, and in Hosanna, where the aria format is used in the twenty-minute monologue which opens the second act.
- ⁵Tremblay, Marie-Lou, p. 23.
- ⁶Ibid., p. 42.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 43.
- ⁸Ibid.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 53.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 67.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 82f.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 79.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 81.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵Dennis Kucherawy, Performing Arts in Canada, Spring 1977, p. 45.
- ¹⁶Lawrence Sabbath, "Adieu mes amis," The Montreal Star, 19 February 1977, p. E-6.
- ¹⁷James Quig, "The Joual Revolution," p. 19.

CHAPTER V

¹Jean Chevrier and Robert Charlebois, "The Frog Song,"
copyright Les Editions Conception, n.d.

²This translates as "masters in our own home" and "Québec
knows how."

³Dennis Kucherawy, Performing Arts in Canada, Spring 1977,
p. 45.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Gail Scott, "Revolutionary Spirits," p. 48.

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- Interview. Place aux Femmes. Radio-Canada, April 18, 1969.
- Interview. Les héros de mon enfance. Radio-Canada, June 21, 1970.

APPENDIX

FIRST PRODUCTIONS AND FIRST PUBLICATIONS OF PLAYS BY MICHEL TREMBLAY#

- 1964 Le Train produced on CBFT (Radio-Canada television) Montreal. (June). Winner of the Concours des Jeunes Auteurs.
- 1966 En pièces détachées produced at Le Patriote theatre, Montreal, by Le Mouvement Contemporain.
- 1968 Les belles-soeurs produced at Le Théâtre du Rideau Vert, Montreal. (August 28). Directed by Anréé Brassard.
- Les belles-soeurs published in Théâtre Vivant No. 6. Holt, Rinehart et Winston at C.E.A.D.
- 1969 La Duchesse de Langeais produced by Les Insolents de Val d'Or. Val d'Or, Quebec. (Spring.) Directed by Hélène Bélanger.
- Demain matin Montréal m'attend produced at Théâtre de l'Expo, Montreal. (Summer.) Directed by André Brassard.
- Le train produced at le Théâtre de la Place Ville Marie, Montreal.
- En pièces détachées produced at Théâtre de Quat'Sous, Montreal.
- Trois petits tours produced on CBFT, Montreal. (December.)
- 1970 En pèces détachées avec La Duchesse de Langeais published by Leméac, Montreal.
- 1971 Trois petits tours published by Leméac, Québec.
- A toi, pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou produced at Théâtre de Quat'Sous, Montreal. (April 29.) Directed by André Brassard.
- A toi, pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou published by Leméac, Montreal.

This list does not include plays translated and adapted by Michel Tremblay.

En pièces détachées produced for television by Radio-Canada. (March 6, 1971 and July 23, 1972.)

1972 Demain matin Montréal m'attend produced at Théâtre Maisonneuve of the Place des Arts, Montreal by Les Productions Buissonneau Inc. (March 16.) Directed by André Brassard.

1972 Demain matin Montréal m'attend published by Leméac, Montréal.

Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco produced at the Tarragon Theatre, Toronto. (November 4.) Directed by Bill Glassco.

Les belles-soeurs published by Leméac, Montréal.

En pièces détachées published by Leméac, Montréal.

1973 Like Death Warmed Over (En pièces détachées), translated by Allan Van Meer, produced in English by The Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg. (January.) Directed by André Brassard.

Like Death Warmed Over (En pièces détachées) published by Playwrights Co-op, Toronto.

Les belles-soeurs, translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco, produced in English at St. Lawrence Centre, Toronto. (April 3.) Directed by André Brassard.

Hosanna produced at Théâtre de Quat'Sous, Montreal. (May 10.) Directed by André Brassard.

Hosanna with La Duchesse de Langeais published by Leméac, Ottawa.

1974 Hosanna, translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco, produced in English at the Tarragon Theatre, Toronto. (May 15.) Directed by Bill Glassco. This same production opened on Broadway at the Bijou Theatre, New York City. (October 14.)

Bonjour là bonjour produced by La Compagnie des Deux Chaises, Ottawa. (August 22.) Directed by André Brassard. Subsequent performances were held in Quebec, Montreal, Shawinigan, and Sherbrooke.

Bonjour là, bonjour published by Leméac, Montréal.

Hosanna, translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco, published by Talonbooks, Vancouver.

Les belles-soeurs, translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco, published by Talonbooks, Vancouver.

Il était une fois dans l'est, film in collaboration with André Brassard. Canada's entry into the 1974 Cannes Film Festival.

- 1975 Bonjour là, bonjour, translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco, produced in English at the Tarragon Theatre, Toronto. (February 1.)

Forever Yours, Marie-Lou, translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco, published by Talonbooks, Vancouver.

- 1976 Sainte Carmen de la Main produced by La Compagnie Jean Duceppe, Montreal. (July 20.) Directed by André Brassard. The production closed after three performances.

Sainte Carmen de la Main published by Leméac, Montréal.

Les héros de mon enfance produced by La Compagnie du Théâtre de Marjolaine at Eastman. Directed by Gaetan Labréche.

Les héros de mon enfance published by Leméac, Montreal.

- 1977 Le soleil se lève en retard, a film, opened in Montreal, (February).

Damnée Manon, Sacrée Sandra produced at Théâtre de Quat'Sous, Montreal. (February)

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